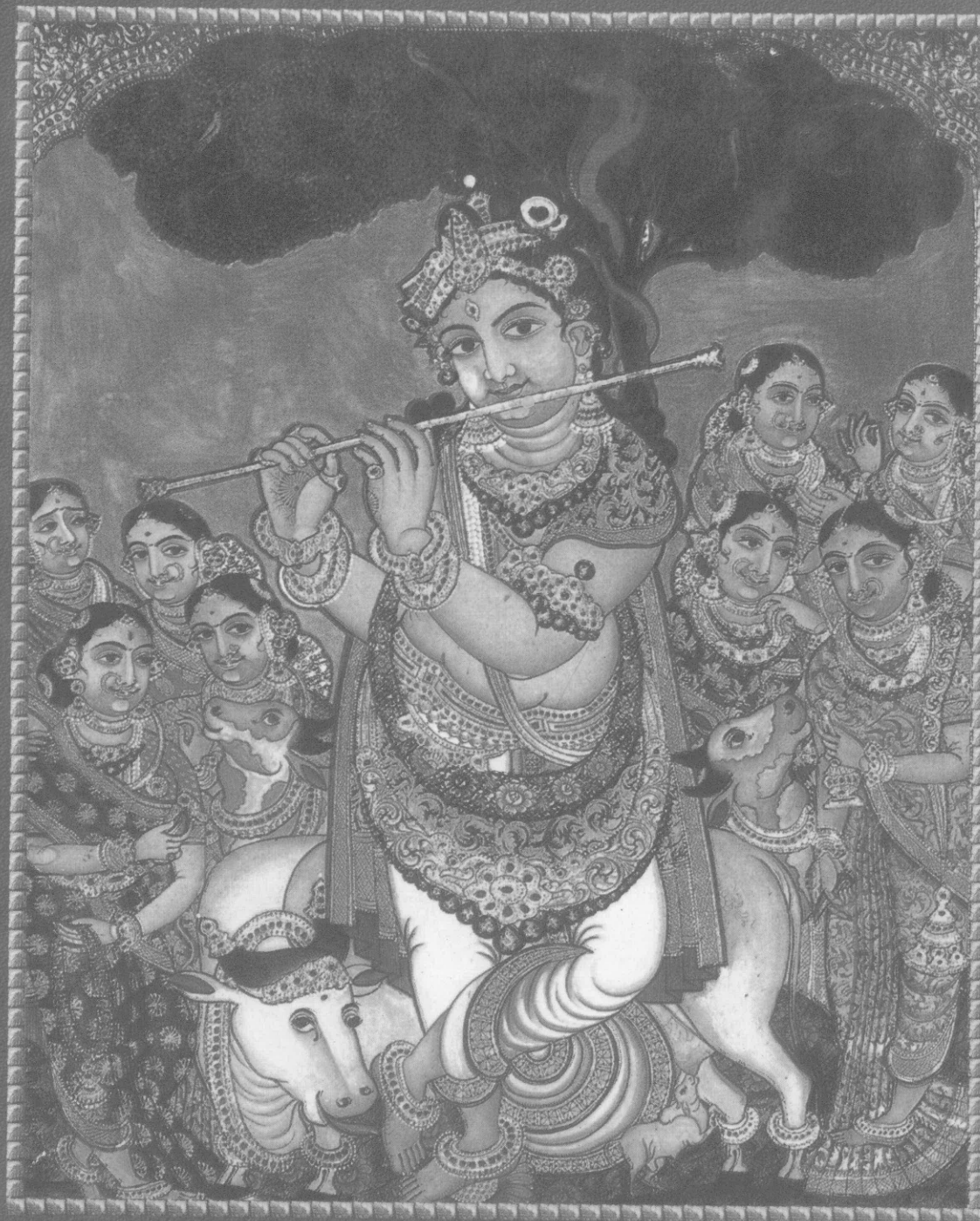


Krishna

THE LIVING SPIRIT OF VRINDAVANA



Dr. Daljeet

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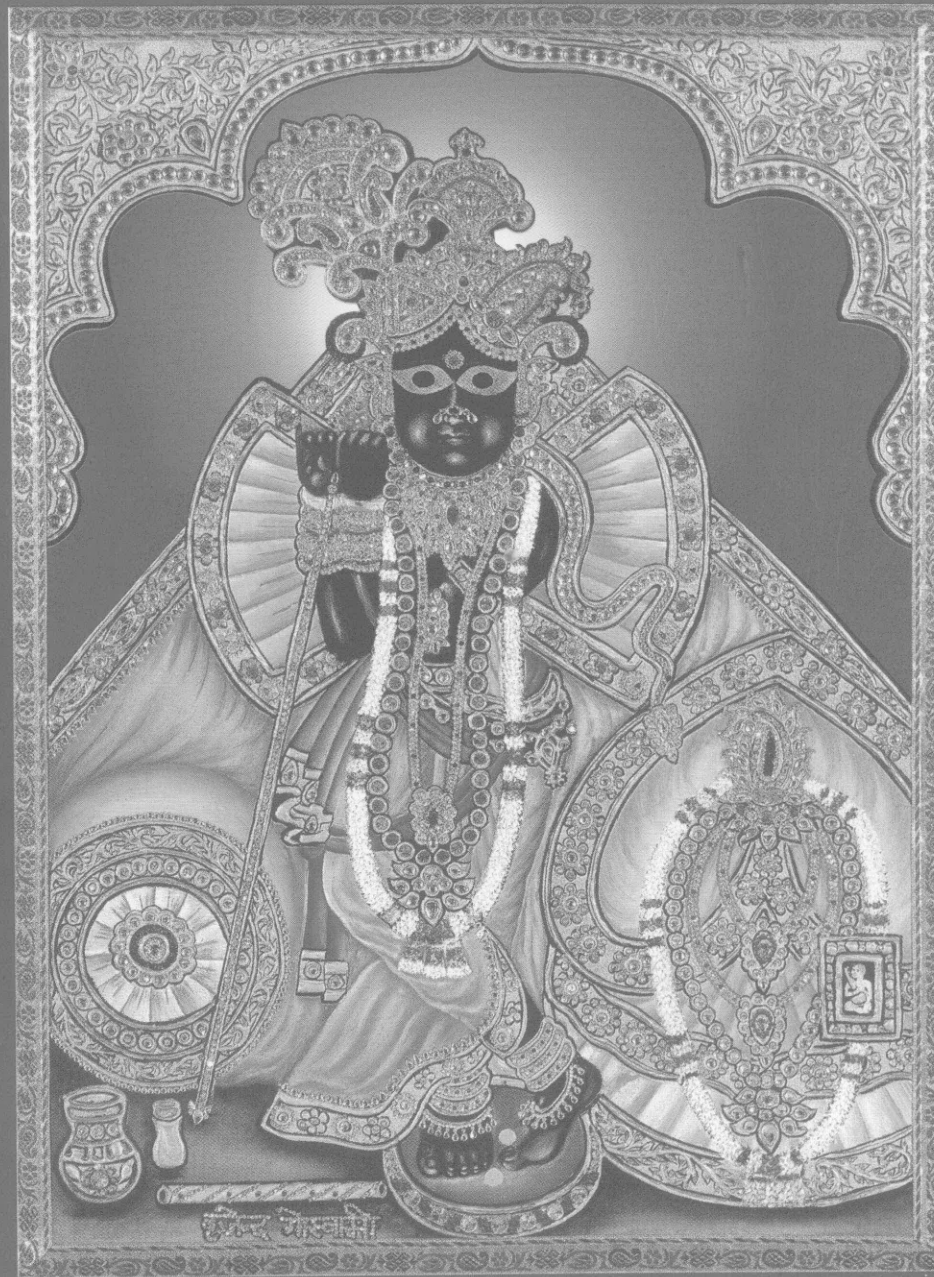
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Dedicated to Sri Bānkē Bihāri Ji



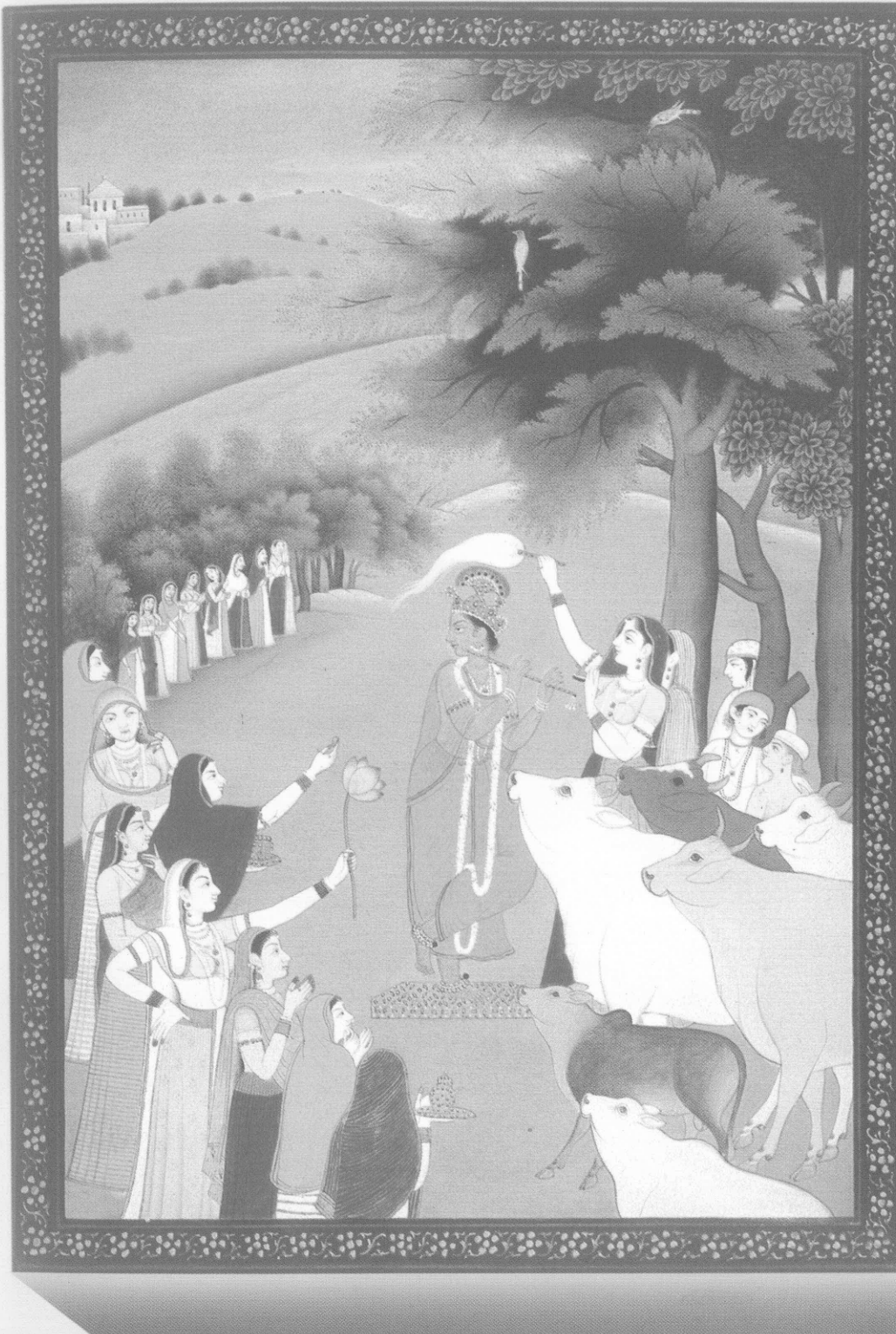
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Krishna

THE LIVING SPIRIT OF VRINDAVANA

Lord Krishna, as we, his devotees, conceive him today, was never born nor he ever died. He seems hardly to be an occurrence of chronology scaled in days, months and years. We identify him with one who was present before the solar cycle began to operate, or before anything came into being. We conceive him as the ultimate — the first and the last. He exists in love, is attainable in submission and blends, transcends into him who in his love and submission forsakes himself. He is for painters, for artists a face, a figure with innumerable postures, for poets and writers a theme with unending depth and expansion, for devotees and worshippers the supreme deity, for philosophers and thinkers the ultimate truth, for lovers the most lovable for life the most perfect model, for creativity the proto of all types, and for *yogis* the ultimate secret of *yoga*. A reality could not be so unimaginably strange and a human form, if he ever had one, possessed of such ideals of life. Human intellect does not conceive anything better, and imaginative innovations could not go farther. Scholars assess and fix the date of his deification and the ritualists celebrate his birth performing his birth rites, but, to most of us, the cycle of birth and death always appeared to be too narrow to encompass in it an entity like Lord Krishna.

The Divine flute of Krishna, Kangra, circa A.D. 1800



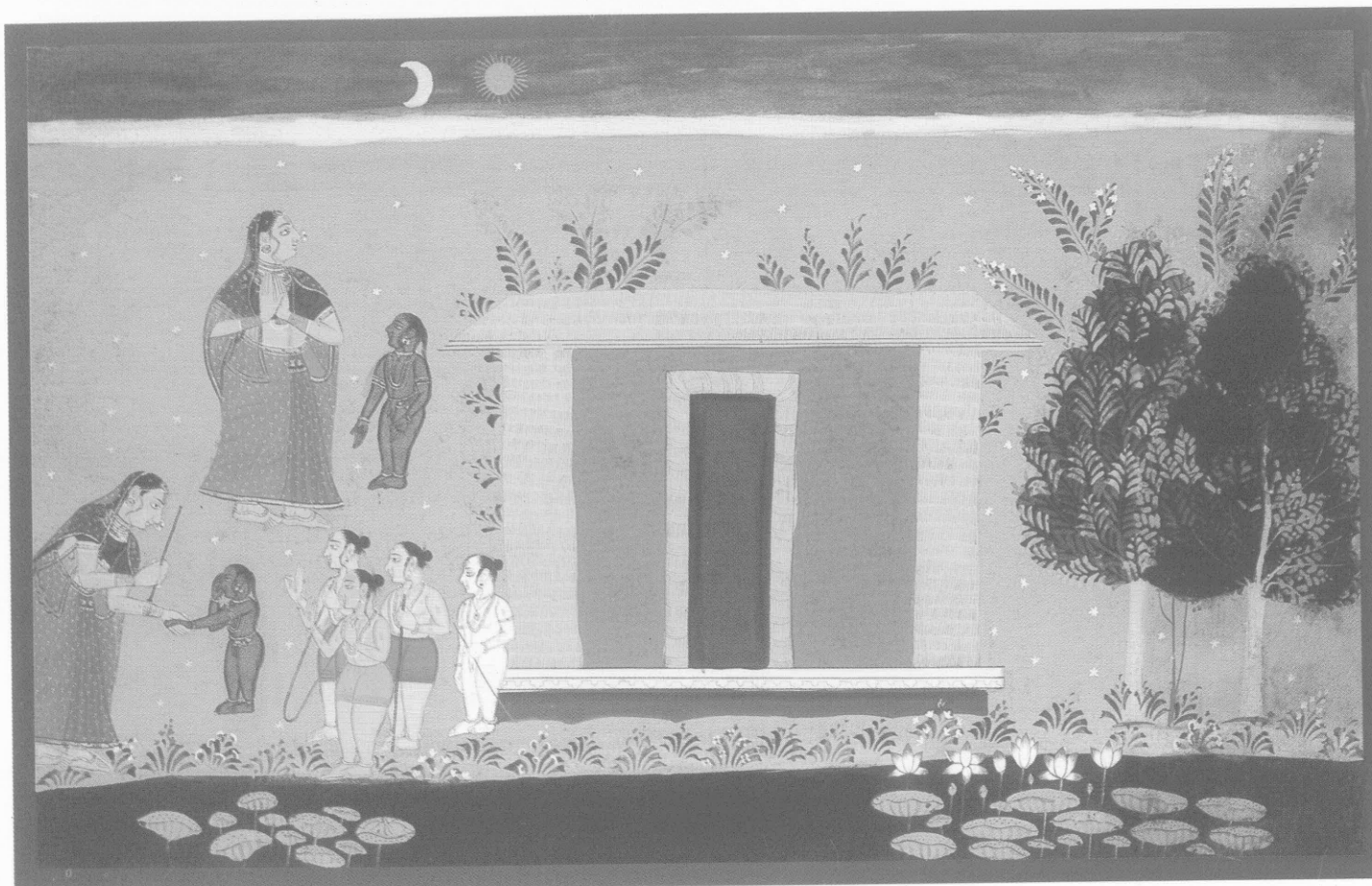
The story of his life, as allude literary texts and epigraphs, comes to be some three thousand years old. Initially references to him restrict only to his name and are scattered and sometimes contradictory, *Rigveda* refers to some Krishna Angirasa. The *Āittareya Āranyaka* alludes to a Krishna Harita, a teacher. The *Chhāndgya Upaniṣhada* mentions a vedic seer by the name of Krihsna who was Devakī's son. There are some other allusions but they are alike occasional throwing no light on his life or personality. In the *Mahābhārata* he emerges for the first time as its central figure with the multifarious personality. Here he is a great warrior, an accomplished charioteer, teacher, intrepid Vrishni hero, and a statesman and diplomat of very high calibre. Initially in the *Mahābhārata* he is an average human being but a little later he emerges as a great warrior. Before long there is further elevation in his personality. He appears to be first a semi-divine entity, then something like an incarnation of Vishṇu and finally, the supreme God. However, the emphasis in the *Mahābhārata* is laid only on his personality aspect. It hardly throws any light on his personal life and least on its early days. The elaborate details of his early days and personal aspect of his life were subsequently added by the *Purāṇas* such as *Harivaṃsa Purāṇa*, *Brahma Purāṇa*, *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* and others. Born of social, cultural and religious needs of the concurrent Indian society during this vast post *Purāṇas* period of some two thousand years

numerous myths and legends grew around his tale which, as they were aimed at, left profound impact on the subsequent Indian life and culture. Literary and artistic innovations, based on observation of children's psychology and human behaviour, his childhood and early days being in greater focus and the subject of prime interest, expanded his tale solely on humane lines building out of *Purāṇas*' legendary Krishna the charismatic Krishna of our belief.

Enormous details, mostly imaginative, though as much realistic, tend to depict him as a tender lovable most extraordinary child crawling in the courtyard of his foster parents, Nanda and Yashodā. From the very birth his life is most eventful. As soon as his mother Devakī bears him in the prison of Kamsa, a deep, deathlike slumber arrests in its grip the prison guards securing the prison gates, and the gates themselves fall open to let him be transported from the prison to Nanda's abode at Gokula, frustrating Kamsa's designs to eliminate him soon after he is born. Yamunā on way to Gokula is in flood, but a touch of his foot reduces its waters to walkable depths. A huge serpent from inside its waters furls its hood over him to protect him from the torrential rains. It is said, he chose the hour of his birth, the auspicious hour of midnight under the constellation *Abhijit*, the one which heralds victory. Unusual were his pre-birth phenomenon of nature, oceans agitated, the earth quaked, fire rekindled of its own, auspicious breezes began blowing, dust settled down and luminous bodies were seen shining in the sky. The sound of the celestial drums was heard reaching the earth and gods showered flowers when the heavenly musicians and nymphs sang in his praise (*Harivaṃsa Purāṇa*).



Krishna Killing Putanā, Malwa, Central India, circa A.D. 1660



Yasodha sees the mother earth in the mouth of Krishna, Mewar, Rajasthan, dated A.D. 1719

Devakī was Kāṁsa's sister. At the time of her wedding the sky echoed with a divine prediction saying, her eighth child would kill Kāṁsa. For undoing the prediction Kāṁsa put Devakī and her husband Vāsudeva into prison under heavy guard with intention to kill each of the children as soon as he or she was born. Kāṁsa had no difficulty in killing their first six children despite resistance from Devakī. Their seventh child, Balarāma, had a miraculous escape. Devakī conceived him, but before he was given birth, he got shifted to the womb of Rohiṇī, Vāsudeva's other wife. Their eighth child was Krishna. A little before he was born, Devakī and Vāsudeva had a vision of him in his divine form. On the other hand, the night Krishna was born was a disturbed one for Kāṁsa. He saw himself in dream as a headless corpse and his decapitated head lay on the ground glaring back at him. He woke but to hear all around him the roaring sounds

of a thunderous storm. In the morning the news of Devakī's having given birth to her eighth child reached him. He rushed to the prison only to find there a female child instead. The cruel hands picked up the new-born and to dash her on stone for killing and whirled her into the air, but the child never returned to the earth. He heard instead a voice from the sky proclaiming that the one who would destroy him was born on earth.

The one who would destroy Kāṁsa is crawling now in the courtyards of Nanda and Yashodā. Immense is Yashodā joy, though the child she is feeling so attached to is her son only by exchange. Her own child, the girl taken away by Vāsudeva and whirled by Kāṁsa into air has disappeared in sky. Yashodā's son is exceptionally lovable, naughty and mischievous and, at the same time, awe inspiring strange and brave. He is fond of butter, so fond that he does not hesitate in stealing it from the earthen pots of cowherdresses of Vraja. Artists and poets, in their artistic and literary innovations of his child life have always felt specially delighted in seeing him stealing butter and in his using for it ever new tacts and devices, and in being punished for such theft by mother Yashodā and sometimes by cowherds who would tie him up with a rope outwardly for punishing him but inwardly for having and enjoying his company for as long as possible. There developed in the art of south, especially of Thanjavur, a cult known as *Navaneeta* Krishṇa, and in Hindi poetry, more



Krishṇa stealing the butter, Basohli, Pahari, circa A.D. 1730



particularly of Surdasa, that of *Mākhanachora* Krishna. The creative genius of the poets and artists, have always sought special delight in elaborating the mischiefs, curious acts, jealous complaints, innocent excuses and miraculous deeds of his childhood. Krishna's childhood is not a phase of life. It is a life in itself, independent and fully accomplished.

The boy Krishna is a great lover and is as greatly loved. He is fascinating youth attracting everyone around, alike by his appearance, behaviour, acts and the music he plays on his *vanshī*. Intoxicated in his love not only the cowherdesses of Vraja or his *sakhas*, the cowherd boys, forget themselves and find doing anything difficult unless they see or hear him but even the cows of Vraja stop grazing until they hear him play on his flute. As for him, he teases alike all cowherdesses of Vraja, but he is keenly, or rather madly, in love with Rādhā, an elderly cowherdess married to someone else. Curious and strange is the spectacle. The supreme being came to overthrow evil is seen so dallying sensually with a maiden. It is not hence far fetched that people see in this sport of dalliance, a sort of divine play, his *leelā*, as it has been termed, and as this *leelā*- Krishna fascinates everyone with his divine sport, he has been called *Mohana*, the one who allures all. Krishna literally means the one who is dark, but in context to Lord Krishna more significant is the meaning which its root word *Krs* conveys. It means to 'drag', that is, Krishna is one who drags away the pains and sufferings and the conflicts of age, the one who drags away into the

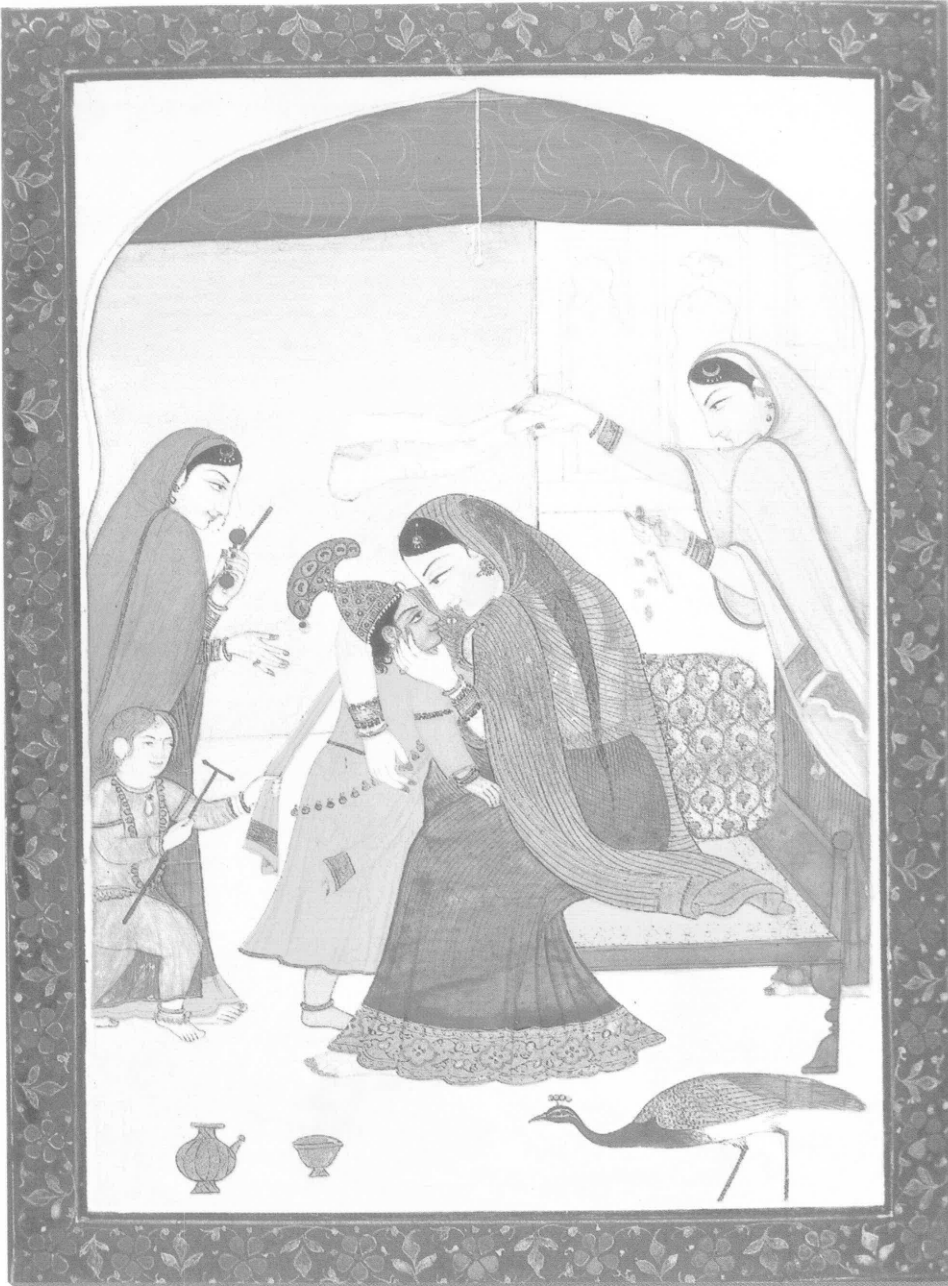
Krishna Dancing on the coils of Kālīyā, Chola, Bronze, circa A.D. 10th — 11th century.

avenues of love and submission, the one who drags away redeeming from the cycle of birth and death. The darkness has infinite depth. His dark complexion hence stands for infinity which Lord Vishṇu represents. He thus represents and incarnates Lord Vishṇu.

Astrological predictions assign to him the role of destroying demons and extinguishing evil. This he beings soon after his birth. Kāṁsa was convinced that Nanda's son, Kṛishṇa, was the child who was born to slay him as per the celestial proclamation. He wants to eliminate the child but not at the cost of annoying Nanda who, he knows, the Yadava tribe holds in great reverence. He, hence, plans to kill the child only by conspiring against him. A few days after the birth of the child, Kṛishṇa, Kāṁsa deposes his sister Putanā to go to Nanda's house as nurse and feed Kṛishṇa from her poison coated breasts. The child sucks away her very life and she falls lifeless on earth. The news of Putanā's death shakes Kāṁsa with fear and apprehension. Kāṁsa then puts Shakatāsura, the demon in the form of a cart, to the job of killing Kṛishṇa. Shakatāsura takes a position in Nanda's house. One day when Kṛishṇa falls asleep, mother Yashoda lays him underneath the cart, which is only Shakata in cart form. Before Shakata harmed him he wakes up and cries for milk, and when his cry is not heard, in fury he hits the wheels of the cart with his legs and breaks it into pieces destroying Shakatāsura. Kāṁsa makes yet another effort to kill Kṛishṇa. He uses this time the whirlwind demon Triṇāvata for the purpose. With a great storm Trinavata snatches Kṛishṇa from

*Kṛishṇa lifting mount Govardhana, Hoysala, Halebid,
Stone, 13-14th century.*

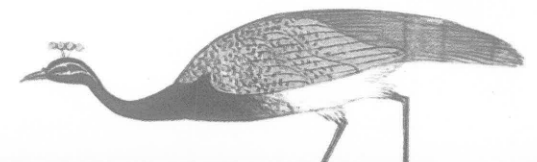




Mother Yashodā cajoling Krishna, Kangra, Pahari, circa A.D. 1800

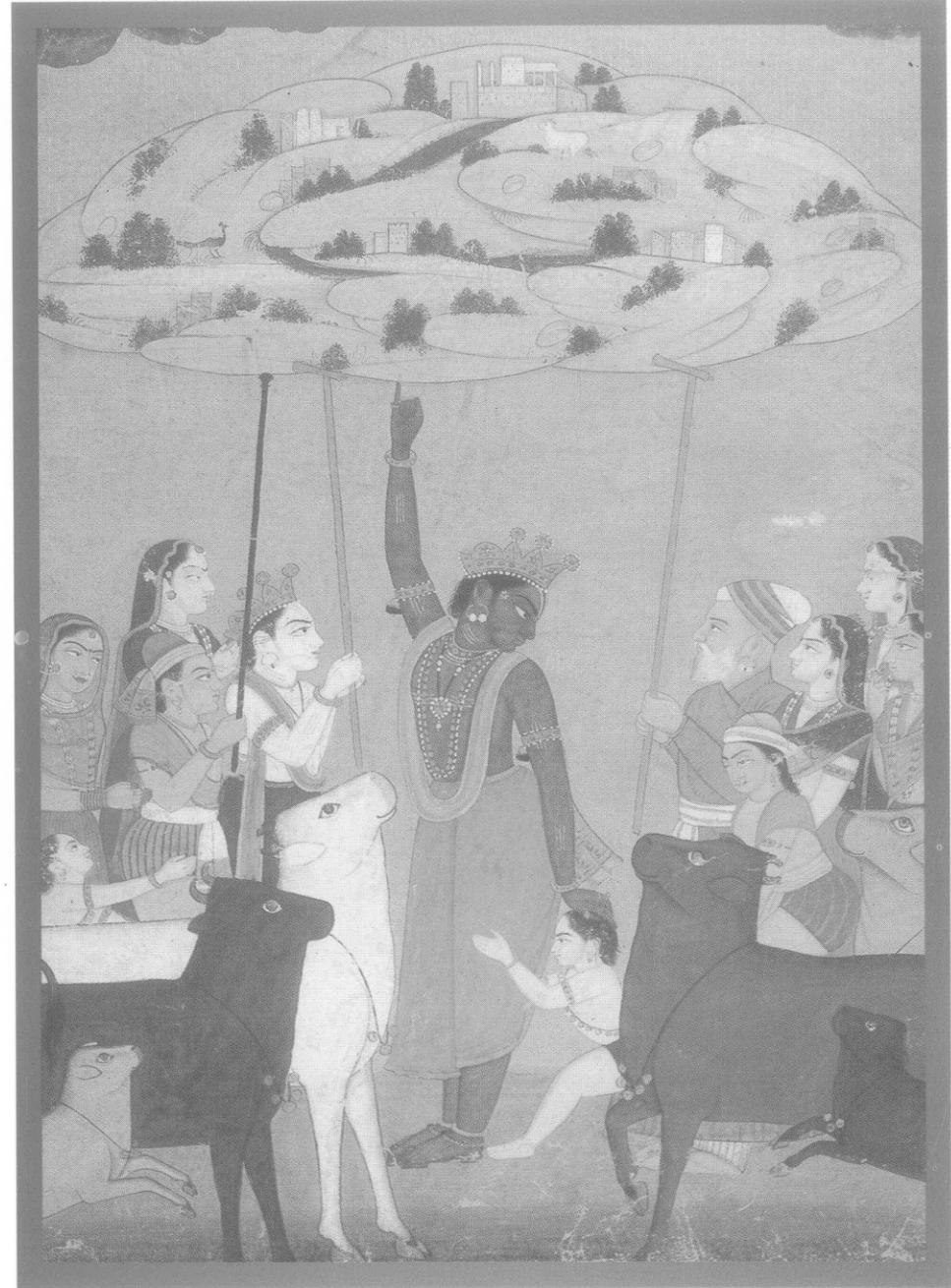
Yashodā's lap and flies away with him. Krishna increases his body weight so much that the demon gets pressed under it. Krishna then catches the demon by throat and throttles him to death. When Yashodā reaches him, she finds him playing on his massive corpse, indifferent to what has just happened. Every episode shakes Yashoda with fear and every time she summons Brahmins to perform auspicious rites for the child's welfare. Nanda too feels afraid and distributes grains and coins to Brahmins and poor, though by now all have begun to feel that this exceptionally lovable boy is not only extraordinary but is also Divine. His acts make every one feel that the Supreme Spirit which animates the entire universe having taken the human form, the form of Krishna, is before them in their midst.

After Krishna along with his elder brother Balārāma grows to a boy, Yadavas' family priest Gargācharya gives them the names Balārāma and Krishna. With large eyes and tousled curly hair framing their glowing faces their beauty is undoubtedly exquisite. Tending the cows and taking them to grazing is the primary occupation of Vraja. When a lovable person like Krishna does it, it delights exceptionally the inhabitants of Vraja and more so when they observe him playing with cowhered boys. Now, every morning when people of Vraja send off their cattle





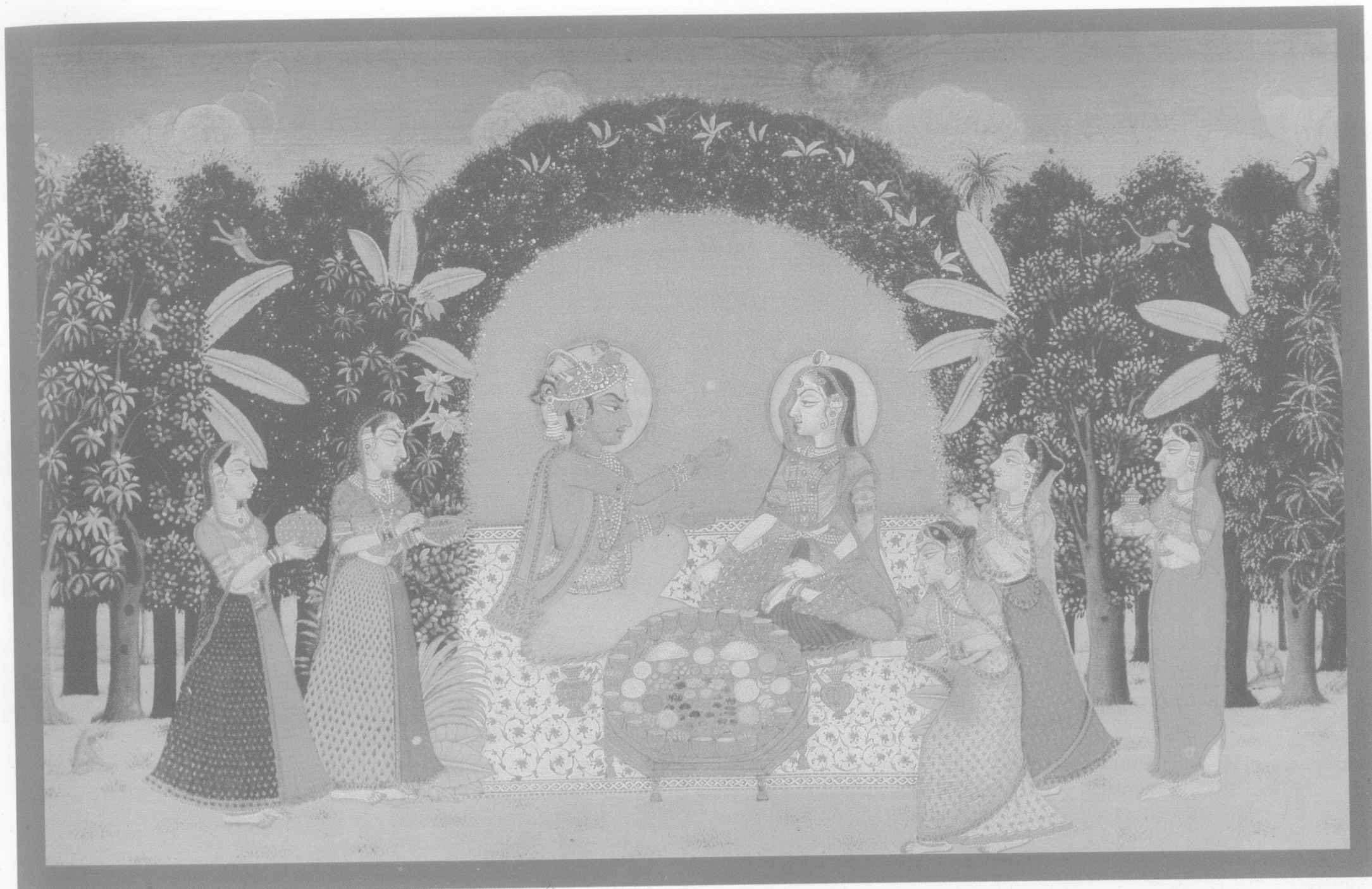
to forest and every evening when at the hour of cow-dust, they return have assumed the status of festivals. Trifles, though added with semi-divine and superhuman occurrences, are alluded to in texts and artistic innovations. Balarāma notes Krishṇa eating mud. The matter is reported to mother Yashodā who forces open Krishṇa's mouth but is amazed to see in it the entire universe instead, the *Virātarūpa*, or all embracing form of Krishṇa. There are complaints of his stealing butter in connivance with other cowered boys from any house they choose but Yashodā pays no heed believing her son will do no such thing. One day caught red-handed he is brought to her with his face smeared with butter. But Krishṇa, instead of admitting his offence, pleads ignorance not knowing how the butter reached his mouth and alleges counterly some one unknown who out of enmity so smeared his face. The innocent excuse makes Yashodā throw off the stick she had in her hand to punish him and she embraces her son. Annoyed with similar repeated complaints, she one day ties him to a mortar lying in the courtyard of the house. A little later the busy Yashodā hears a roaring sound. She rushes out only to find that dragged with the mortar by Krishṇa the two trees standing outside their house were uprooted and their instead stand two *yakshas*, Nalkubera and Manigrīva to



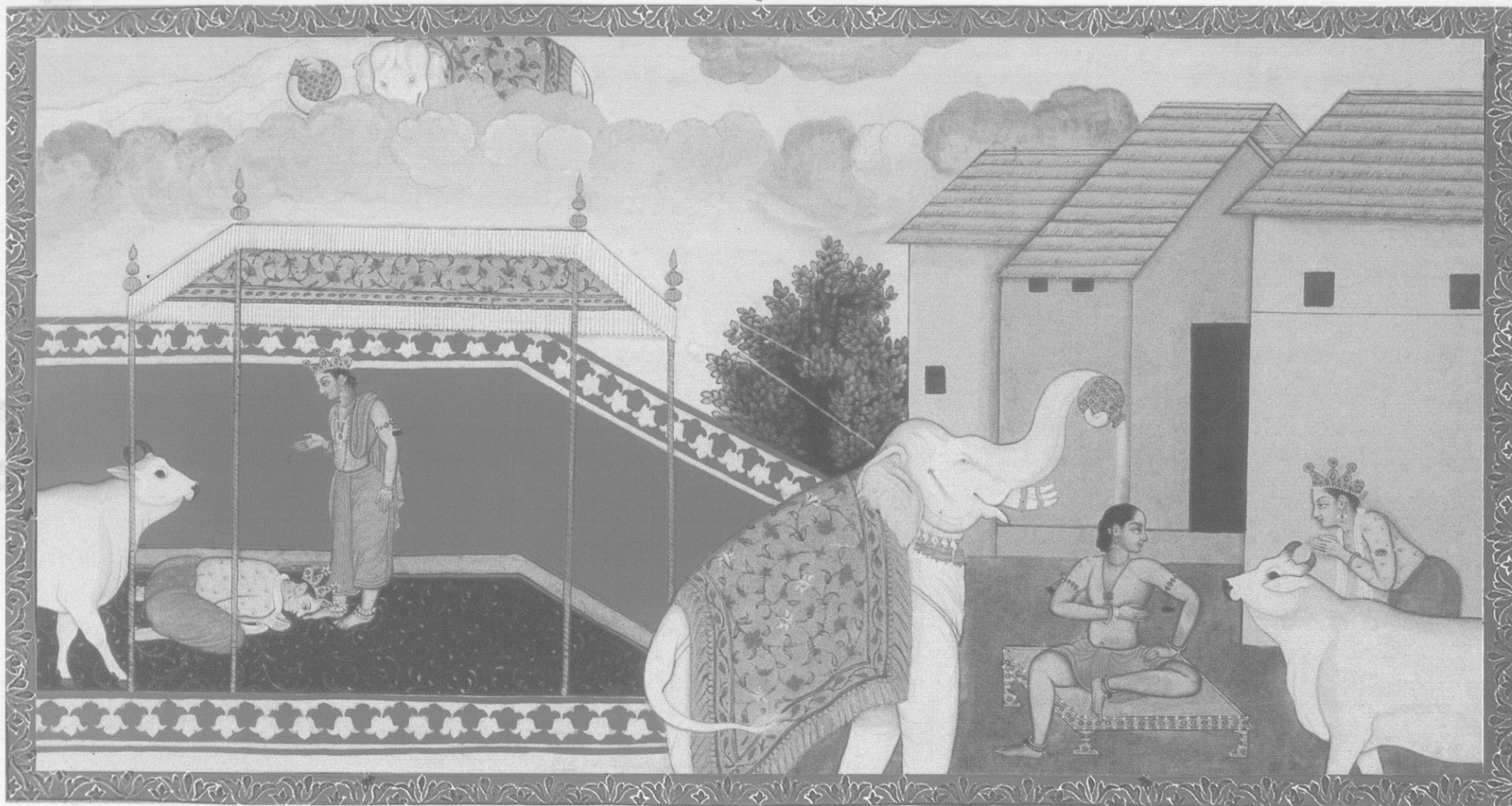
salute her. Converted into trees under a curse the two *yakshas* awaited Vishnu's incarnation to redeem them from their curse.

Nothing adversely results, yet cautious Nanda does not fail to note the strangeness of every occurrences and its thrust towards his son Krishṇa. In consultation with elderly clansmen, he, hence, decides to shift from Gokula to Vrindāvana. Now Krishṇa is a grown up boy endowed with immense divine power, physical charm and prowess and a winsome smile enchanting everyone, and to this adds further the green, pleasant and romantic surroundings of Vrindāvana. Sporting, tending cattle and the like is yet Krishṇa and Balarāma's main occupation. This shifting, however, does not change Kāṁsa's attitude. Centre of his conspiracies too shifts to Vrindāvana. He sends Vatāsura, a demon disguised as a cow, to kill Krishṇa. Vatāsura mixes with Krishṇa's cows, he, however, recognises him and lifting him by his legs smashes him on a rock and kills. Bakāsura, the crane demon, is the next deputed to kill him. Bakāsura succeeds in lifting Krishṇa in his beak, but in no time Krishṇa gathers his divine energy with the heat of which Bakāsura looses his grip and Krishṇa pressing the beak with his leg and lifting with his mighty arms tears it into two and ends Bakāsura's life. Aghāsura, the brother of Bakāsura, was the next to lay his trap to kill Krishṇa. With his magical powers he assumes the form a huge python expanding his mouth lays its upper part above the clouds and the lower along the ground and remains still and silent. All cowered boys alongwith their cows, mistaking the demon's mouth for a cave, enter it. The demon impatiently awaiting Krishṇa's entry continues to lay still, yet Krishṇa does not fail to recognise him. He instantly jumps into his mouth and so much expands his form that the demon's throat gets choked and unable to breathe he dies. Krishṇa thus saves cows and his *sakhās*.

Despite such failures Kāṁsa does not give up his efforts to eliminate Krishṇa, though every time he succeeds in extricating himself from the traps Kāṁsa lays for him. The ass demon Dhenuka and the horse demon Kesī too attack Krishṇa but instead of harming him they both get killed at his hands. The fire demon trying to devastate the forest is swallowed up by Krishṇa and he thus saves from it the forest, environment and the cattle. He subdues the great serpent Kāliyā who begs him to spare his life saying that he acted only according to his nature, as having acted differently, he would violate the laws that he, as the creator of the universe, has himself formulated for his specie. Krishṇa spares his life but instructs him to leave Yamunā and go to ocean, as Yamunā was not big enough to balance the poisonous effects which he emitted. He also assures Kaliyā that his vehicle Garūda, serpents traditional



Chappan Bhoj, Jaipur, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1800.

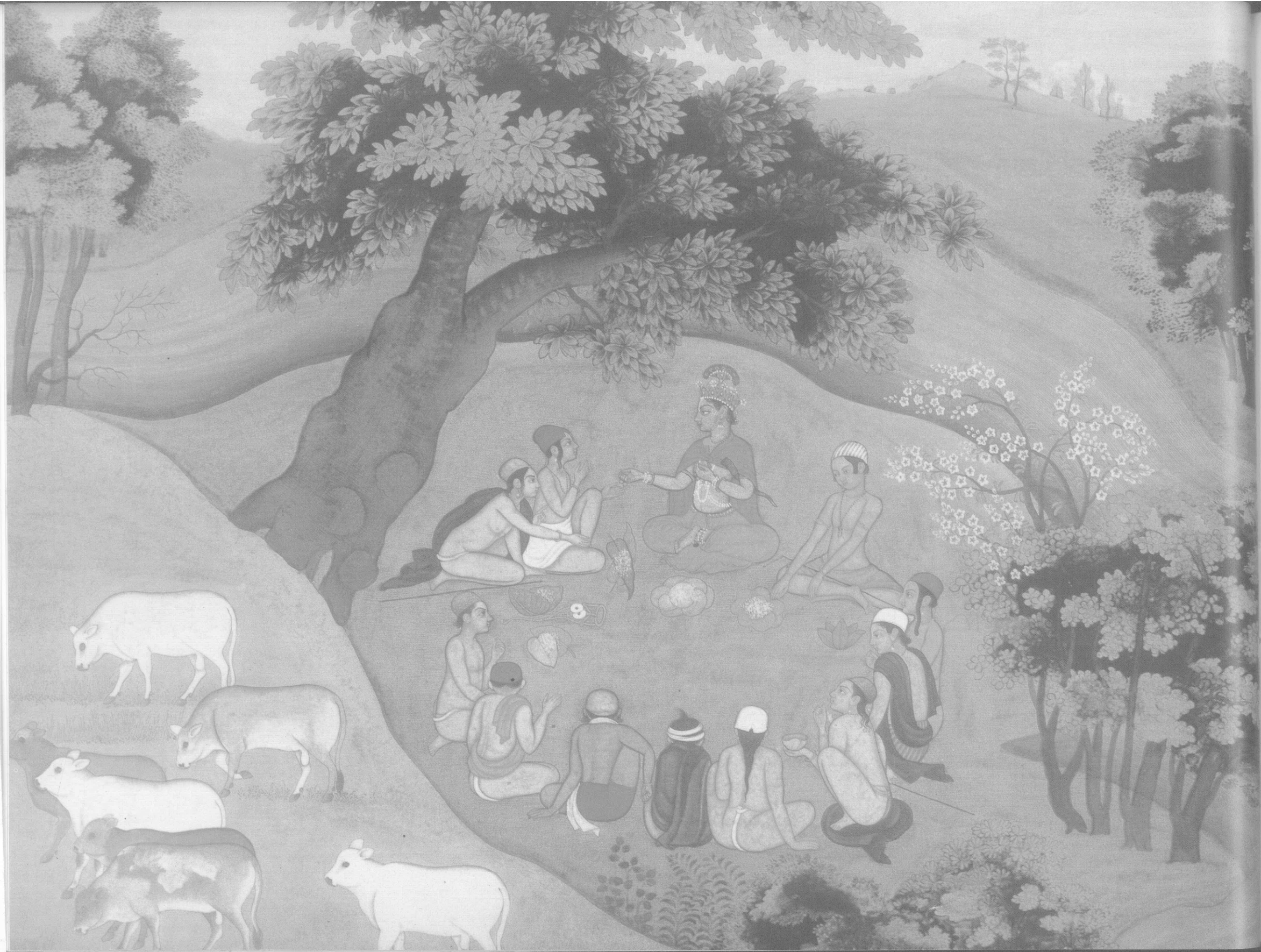


Indra with elephant Airavata paying homage to Krishna, Kangra, Pahari, circa A.D. 1785-90

enemy, after he sees on his hood Krishna's foot-prints, would not attack and devour him.

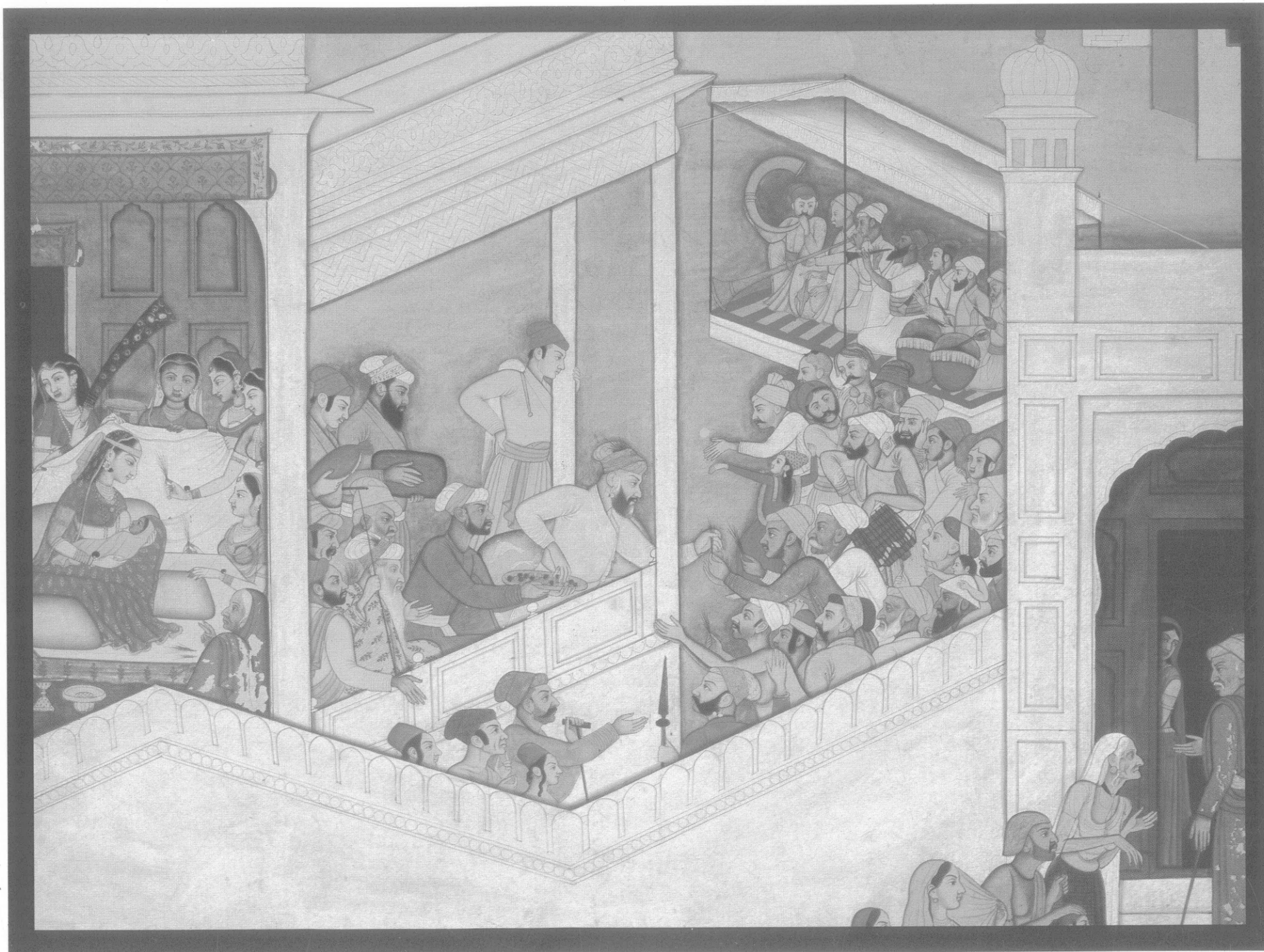
*O*f all the incarnations of Lord Vishnu with Krishna alone is associated the epithet 'The Saviour'. Born as a cowhered boy he walks on earth as the commonest of the common masses and passes most of his life amidst the common people saving them from the calamities and oppressions that they encounter. He serves cattle tending and protecting them, seeks resort amidst shrubs, tree-groves, pastures and meadows, and associating them with him and his *leelās* ads divinity and sanctity to common trees like those of *Kadamba*, common shrubs like *Karil*, ravines, barren lands, animals, birds, mountains and almost the entire nature excepting such ones which endanger, or rather endangered, human life, cattle, environment or its own equilibrium.

*T*he life at Vrindāvana was now entirely different. Initially the people of Vraja felt Krishna was an exceptionally lovable boy and they hence loved him. Later they felt he had extra-ordinary prowess and miraculous strength. They hence revered him. But after he lifted Mount Govardhana, they were convinced that he was a Divine being and they hence worshipped him. However, the love remained the keynote of the sylvan land of Vrindāvana. Whether they revered him or worshipped, the foremost remained their love for him, changing from a sensual one to a kind of divine romance and extending from cowhered boys and cowherdesses and the human beings in general to birds, cows, cattle and animals, trees, shrubs, meadows and mountains of Vrindāvana. With his physical charm blended with his Divine charisma, the melodious music he played and the elegance of his behaviour he bewitched all, the young and the old, the human beings and the animals, the male and the female, the *purusha* and the *prakriti*. He knitted with the thread of love the nature, human acts and aspirations, sensuality and sentiments and even animal carvings, yet under his great Divine shadow it was only his divine romance, his *lilā*. The groves of Vrindāvana had become for him and for Rādhā a romantic rendezvous, the holy sojourn of the souls and the seat of ultimate faith in Krishna which Rādhā and other cowheredesses actually represented.



Krishna

The Living Spirit of Vrindavana



Celebrations on Krishṇa's birth

An illustration to the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, Kangra Pahari,
Paper, 26x25.5 cm, circa A.D. 1785-90, Acc. No. 51.83.

Krishṇa, as is popularly believed, was born in the prison of Kāṁsa, the ruler of Mathura. Krishṇa was the eighth child of Devakī and Vāsudeva. At the time of the marriage of Devakī, Kāṁsa's sister, it was predicted that her eighth child would slay Kāṁsa and free the earth from his tyrannous rule. The panicky ruler had, hence, imprisoned Devakī and Vāsudeva soon after their marriage. Later, he killed all the six children born to Devakī leaving no chance for any of her children killing him. Her seventh child, Balarāma, a son, escaped Kāṁsa's sword, as through a miraculous womb transfer he was born of Rohiṇī, Vāsudeva's other wife, instead.

When Krishṇa, Devakī's eighth child, was born, some divine miracle worked. The prison guard fell asleep in death-like deep slumber and the prison gates, all of them, fell open. Taking it as a Divine direction Devakī and Vāsudeva decided to shift the child. Vāsudeva, across the flooding Yamunā, took the new-born to Gokula to his friend Nanda's house. Surprisingly, Nanda's wife Yashodā too had given birth to a child, a girl, and due to her deep sleep was unaware of it. Vāsudeva exchanged the children and brought back to prison Yashodā's daughter instead.

In the morning the news of Yashodā bearing a son had spread all around in Vraja. Nanda's clansmen, people of Vraja, the ladies and gents, the trumpets blowers and the drummers, and the old and seasoned nurses gathered at Nanda's residence, the occasion taking the shape of a festive celebration and Nanda, like a Mughal emperor, to indicate which the artist has painted him in exact Mughalia costume, receiving all and accepting from them the auspicious grass, *dhruva*, as indication of their good wishes. In the entire vegetation *dhruva* alone is such specie which never dies, never dries and never rises so high as it has ever to fall. Hence, *dhruva* symbolises humble long life and when presented on the occasion of a child's birth, his long life and humble character. Nanda distributed sweets to all. It is this occasion which the painting here mirrors.

The painting has four compartments. On the left, inside the house, Yashodā, with a scarf tied traditionally on her forehead and the new-born Krishṇa in her lap, is receiving advice of the old nurse and *dhruva* from young ladies. In one of the two central compartments Nanda is seen receiving people's good wishes in the form of *dhruva* and distributing to them sweets alongwith his clansmen, and in the other his friends and well wishers are seen thronging his house. In a corner a band of musicians is playing on musical instruments. The fourth one consists of house gate where people are still coming. The door keeper seems to have a dialogue with a few of them who appear to come to getting alms. It is a fine, colourful, balanced painting full of action and activity and belongs to the set of paintings attributed to the one of the artists whom M.S. Randhawa has given the epithet 'the masters of the moonlight'.

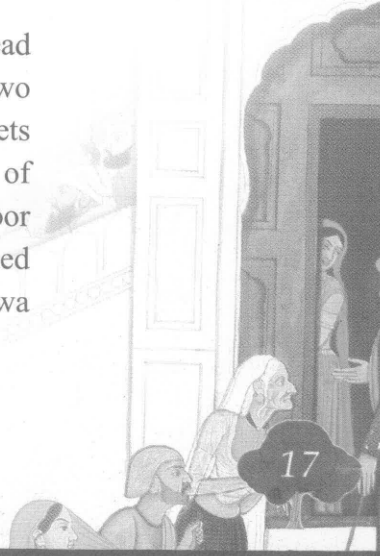


Plate No.: 12

Kaṁsa summons his demons to kill Krishṇa

An illustration to the *Bhāgavata - Purāṇa*

Mewar, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1720-25

Paper, 26x40.5 cm, Acc. No: 54.65/15

From the prediction of Yogamāyā, Yashodā's daughter whom Kaṁsa had supposedly killed taking her as Devakī's eighth child, the mighty ruler of Mathura had come to know that the child who would kill him was born elsewhere. He was informed that Nanda at Gokula also had a child the same night. He decided to eliminate as danger to his own life Nanda's child and all other children born that night and, hence, summoned all his ministers who were all demons to go and kill Nanda's son. In the inscription given overleaf the artist mentions five of Kaṁsa's deputies, Charnur, Mushtak, Pralambha, Bakāsura and Triṇāvata, who are directed to go and create chaos in Vraja, but in the painting Putanā has also been depicted. She is shown standing with folded hands in front of Kaṁsa who is sitting in a white pavilion. The demon Bakāsura is painted in the form of a big crane. Even elephant Kuvalyapīda is painted whom Krishṇa killed in the city of Mathura when Kaṁsa invited him for a wrestling competition.

This painting is from the unpublished series of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* paintings in the National Museum collection. Other known series of this period are *Gita-Govinda*, *Bihari* — *Sat Sai* by artist Jagnath, *Panchākhyano-patra* and *Bānabhedropatra*. All these series are painted under the patronage of Rana Sangram Singh II (1710-34) of Mewar.

The Mewar artist has painted the ruler of Mathura, Kaṁsa, in typical Mewar style of early 18th century. On the deep yellow background he painted the white pavilion for Kaṁsa and used dark grey, black and white colours for demons. But Putanā he painted in red *ghāghrā* and *cholī*.



Plate No.: 13

Krishṇa transforms Arjuna trees into yakshas

Mankot, Pahari, early 18th cent.

Paper, 20.5x31 cm, Acc. No: 1278

Collection: Govt. Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

Mother Yashodā, deciding to punish Krishṇa on repeated complaints of his stealing butter from neighbouring houses, one day tries to tie him with a mortar lying in their courtyard. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says, when she tries to catch him, she finds him beyond her grip and when she ties him, either the rope falls short or breaks. Finally, taking pity on her Krishṇa gets himself tied. Apparently, this is broadly the theme of this painting which has been indicated by broken pieces of rope and with Krishṇa tied to the mortar.

This painting depicts two stories simultaneously. One relates to the sons of Kubera, the guardian and the lord of all wealth, Nalakubera and Manigriva. Both were quite proud and vain. added to this, as Shiva's attendants, they were arrogant as well. Once they were sporting unclad in the water of river Gāṅga with nude *yakshis*. Suddenly, there emerged Mahāmuni Nārada. Noticing his arrival the nude *Yakshis* slipped off the venue but the proud and arrogant sons of Kubera neglected and slighted him. Nārada, out of anger, pronounced on them a curse to the effect that they would convert into Arjuna trees to be released only after Viṣṇu incarnating as Krishṇa uproots them and grant his grace to let them return into their *yakshas* form.

The other one relates to Krishṇa's own mischievous acts. After tying him to mortar Yashodā gets busy in her daily routine. Krishṇa drags the mortar, obviously to release the two *yakshas*, and takes it to the two Arjuna trees standing in his court-yard, where entangling with the two trees the mortar uproots them crashing them to ground which releases the two *yakshas* from Nārada's curse. Inside the house Yashodā hearing the roar of falling trees rushes in anxiety to the spot and feels relieved to see her son safe. However, Krishṇa's miraculous escape from injury and the emergence of the two *yakshas* from the fallen trees make her convinced that her son is a Divine being. The feeling of anxiety on Yashodā's face, the mischievous expression on Krishṇa's face and the massive tangle of the rope have been very powerfully depicted.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮਤਰੰਗਪੁਰਾਨ ਚਤੁਰਥਾਸਕੰਦ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾਯ ਨਮੋ



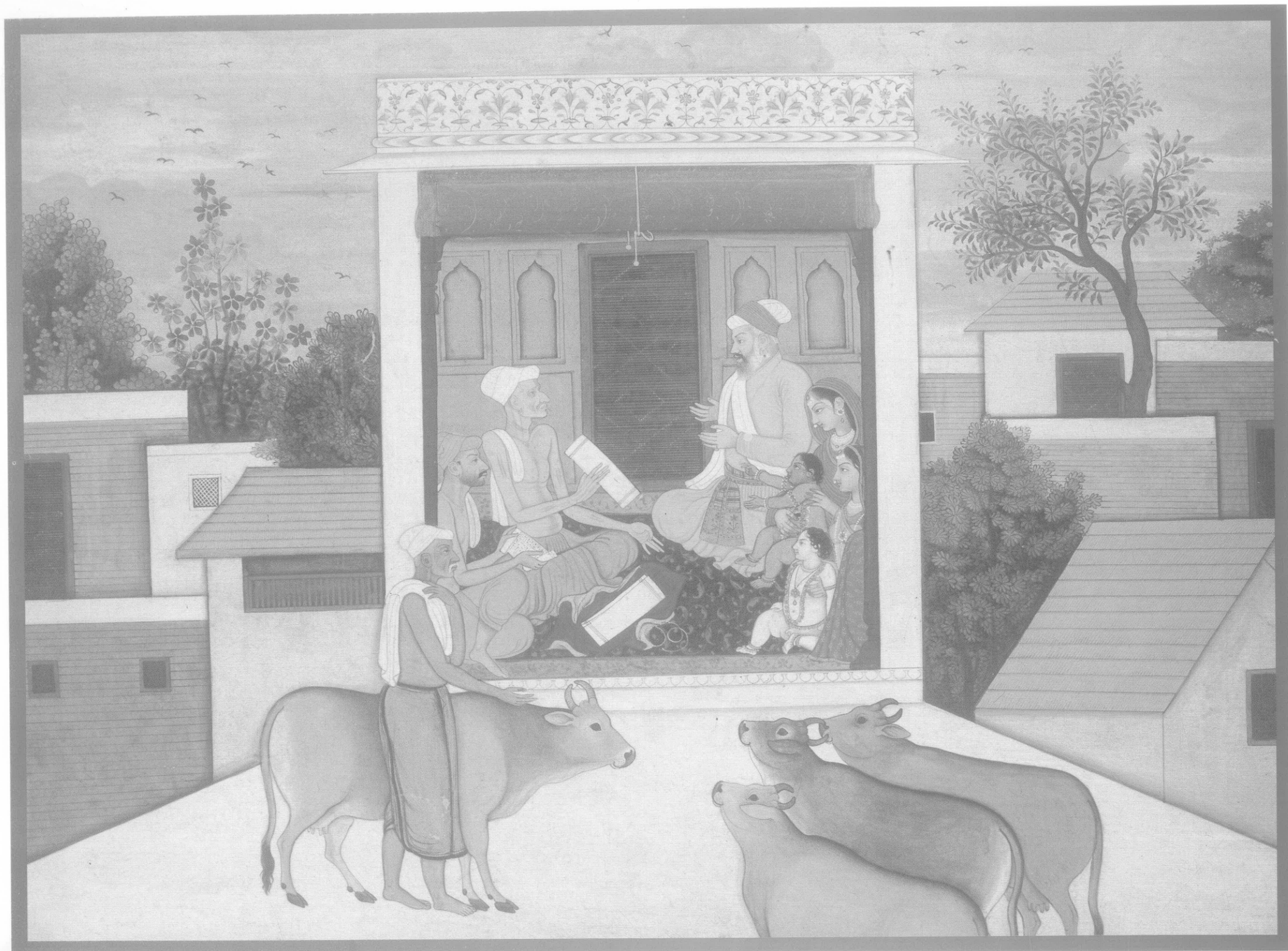


Plate No.: 14

Nāmakaraṇ saṁskāra of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma

The naming ceremony — A folio of Bhāgavata — Purāṇa

Kangra, Pahari, circā A.D. 1785-90

Paper, 26x35.5 cm, Acc. No.: 51.83

After Kṛishṇa and Balarāma had attained the age of *Nāmakaraṇ Saṁskāra* Vāsudeva sent for his family priest Gargāchārya, a well known astrologer, to perform the ceremony of *Nāmakaraṇ* of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma.

The day in Gokula was a day of rejoicing, singing, dancing and festivity. His clansmen and others gathered, Yashodā's father came with many *rishis* and sages for they knew that this was an extraordinary occasion. Priest Garg took the child Kṛishṇa in his arms and smilingly put a *tilak* of sandal wood paste on Kṛishṇa's forehead, sprinkled on him water purified with *mantras*, put a few drops of milk, butter, curd, honey and *ghee* on his lips, and blessed him. While performing the ceremony the old priest continued to recite in his heart the hymns in the praise of Nārāyana. He named the baby — Kṛishṇa. He then took Rohini's child in his lap, repeated the ceremonies and named him - Balarāma.

Gargācharyā foretold that the Divine children would not only kill Kāṁsa but also remove the burden of the mother earth eliminating many other evil elements and restore peace and harmony on earth.

In a beautiful pavilion built on a high platform priest Garga is shown predicting the future of the children to Nanda, who is dressed in Mughal style costume. His turban, beard, *jāmā* all are in typical Mughal fashion. Even the priest Gargāchārya and other *pandits* are shown wearing same type of turbans. Yashodā is holding Kṛishṇa crawling towards the priest. Balarāma is sitting with mother Rohiṇī. The three cows outside the pavilion seem to be listening with eagerness the future of their lord. It is a masterpiece of Kangra style giving us a good account of customs and traditions still followed in Indian families.



Plate No.: 15

Krishṇa demanding moon

Guler, Pahari, circa A.D. 1800

Paper, 26x20cm, Acc. No: 59.148/7

The episodes from the life of Krishṇa have ever remained the most popular subject for miniature paintings and lyrical poetry. The entire Sūr Sāgar — the best of Hindi lyrical poetry, expounds excellently the frolicks of child Krishṇa which Surdasa, one of the most celebrated Hindi poets, creates out of his imagination. One of his lyrics deals with how once the child Krishṇa insists his mother to give him the moon to play with. Mother Yashodā first tries to divert Krishṇa's attention but when he continued to insist for it, she coaxes the moon to come down to the earth and play with her son. As usual, the moon does not come down and remains shining in the sky. Krishṇa's insistence creates a difficult situation for her; but she finds the solution. She brings a round tray filled with water and places it before Krishṇa. The moon reflects in the water contained in it. Mother Yashodā thus appeases Krishṇa.

This painting is an illustration of this verse of Surdasa narrating the above incident of *Bālhaṭha*. The artist has added in his composition an old lady holding a rattle in her hand to cajole Krishṇa. The bowl is held, instead, by Rohiṇī and Balarāma is seen with typical conical cap. This superb painting with delicate colours gives expression to the affection and love of a mother to her child in a very different way.

Plate No. 16

Krishṇa stealing butter

Bikaner, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1750-75

Paper, 28x37.5 cm.

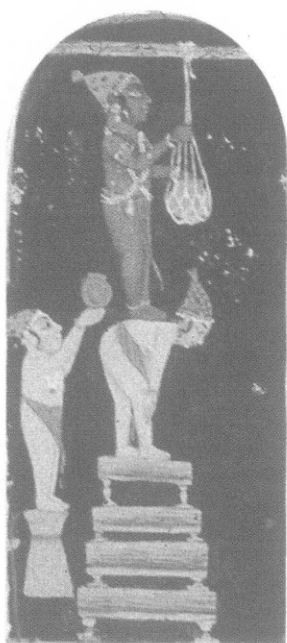
Acc. No. 72.339

Poets, especially Jaideva and Surdasa, have created with their imagination and immortalised with their songs hundred of *lila* forms of Krishṇa, each adored by believing Vaishṇavas as His *leelā*. His acts, the *leelās*, as child have always been the subject of greater interest to all, but more so to those who have sought to recreate him in visual arts, literary songs and tales. One of the most popular theme of his child days has been his love and liking for butter, the *Navaneeta*, which he did not hesitate even to steal. It has given birth to a different Krishṇa cult, the *Navaneeta Krishṇa*.

Here in this painting from Bikaner, Rajasthan, Krishṇa has been painted, with finest strokes of brush and bright colours, stealing butter when mother Yashoda is away from the house to the river Yamuna with women-folk of Vraja. He arranges wooden seats and placing them one over the other reaches the butter pot hanging against ceiling of the house. He steals from the pot butter but instead of eating it first distributes it among the monkeys and his friends outside the house keeping vigile. The wooden seats give some height but not enough to reach the pot. Hence, one of Krishṇa's *sakhas* seat like bends his back to let Krishṇa stand thereon to reach the pot. Krishṇa is handing over the butter to his another *sakha* standing beside him with a pot.

Nanda's house has been beautifully and with great elegance painted as *haveli* resembling the one of Bikaner. On its entire outer surface it is beautifully adorned. In its front and on its back the artist has provided gardens. On the terrace, the first and the second floors, there lay seats with beautiful cushions. The queuing *sakhas* outside the *haveli* door look like a disciplined armed band. Mother Yashoda and the other ladies are seen returning from the river. The rendering is highly vivid, interesting and panoramic.

The blue Krishṇa with conical cap is wearing a small red *kopin*-cloth round his waist. All the boys are dressed alike in colourful conical caps and *langot*, the *kopin* cloth. The ladies on the right are painted in colourful costumes and heavy jewellery.



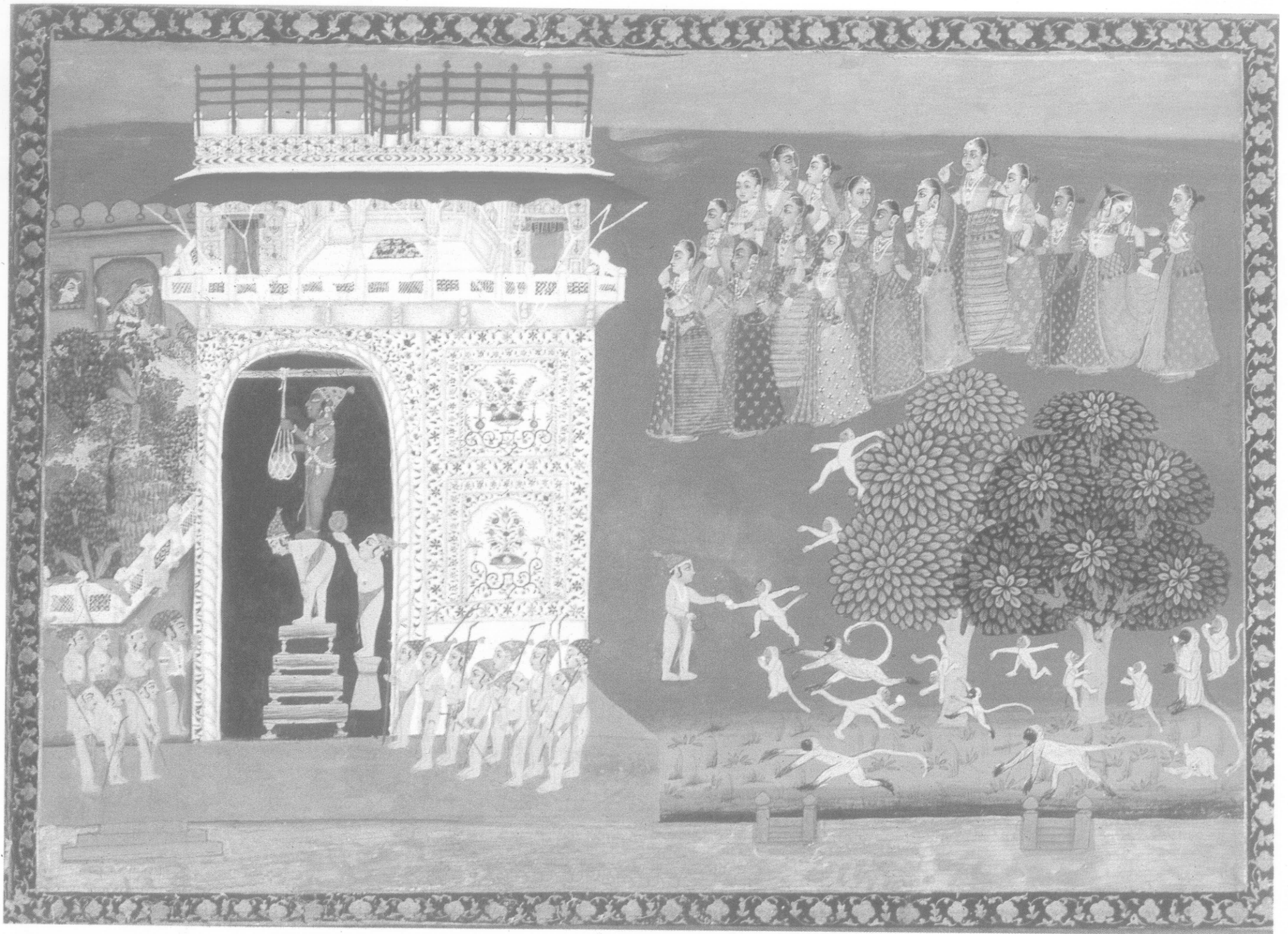


Plate No. 17

Krishṇa killing bull demon Arishta

Mewar, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1720-25

Paper, 26.5x40 cm

Acc. No. 54.65/12

Once when Krishṇa and Balarāma were roaming in forest with cowherd boys- gopas, a ferocious demon of Kāṁsa, Arishta, disguised as a fearful bull emerged in Vraja. The earth shook under his hoofs. His dreadful roar caused the miscarriage of many pregnant women and cows. The terrified residents of Vraja approached Krishṇa for protection. With smile on his lips Krishṇa turned to face the demon. The sight of Krishṇa enraged the bull demon. The demon charged at him, but Krishṇa catching hold of Arishta by his horns, pushed him back to a distance of eighteen paces. Perspiring and short of breath, Arishta sprang back to his feet with the speed of lightening and dashed at Krishṇa once again. But again Krishṇa seized the demon by the horns and hurled him to the ground. He uprooted the left horn and twisted his massive neck, resulting in demon's falling dead on the ground. In this painting ferocious bull is seen returning to his original form of *asura* at the time of his death. His bull neck with one horn is lying on the ground and his human form is painted as if it is just to fall on the earth. In the other part, the gopies are seen expressing their amazement over the killing of the demon. In the centre Krishṇa is shown talking to Balarāma. The row of green trees in the background gives a view of Vrindavāna.

The costumes of Krishṇa and Balarāma are very interesting. Krishṇa is shown wearing a frilled skirt type of garment with plain tight *pyjāmā*. The long white flowers garland and the slim figure of Krishṇa are example of masterly strokes. In spite of brick red background the figures have come out very well with help of bright colours.

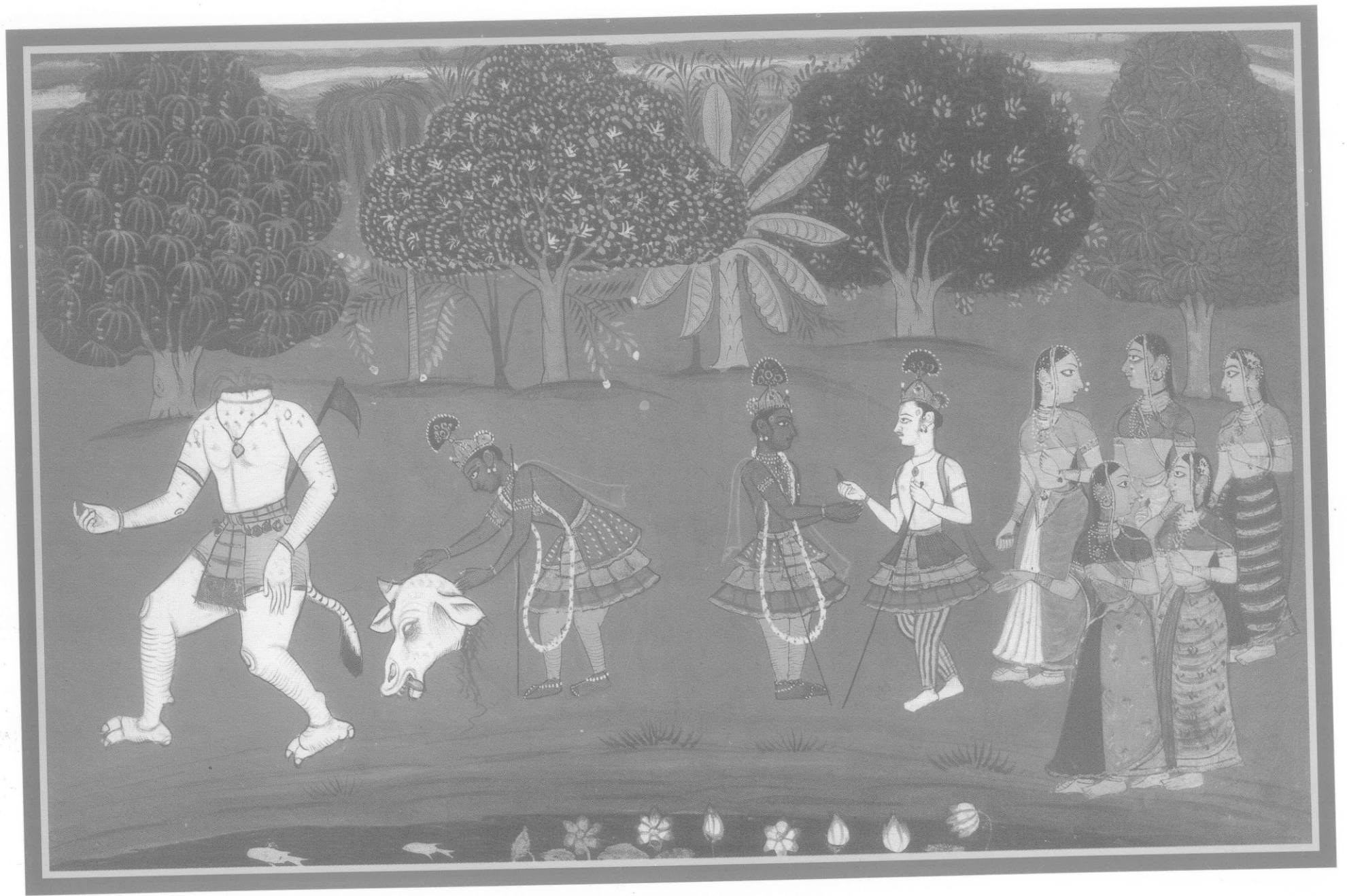


Plate No. : 18

Sage Vashistha worshipping Kāmadhenu

Tanjore, Tamilnadu, circa A.D. 1835-50

Cloth pasted on wood, 40x51 cm

Acc. No. 77.42

Since times immemorial, the cow has been venerable and an object of worship to all Indians alike. She is considered to incarnate all gods and capable of redeeming all her worshippers from the pangs of births and death. In cosmic form Lord Viṣṇu, incarnated as lord Kṛṣṇa, served to keep and protect cow and earned the name Gopālā, the protector of cows. Kāmadhenu, the wish-fulfilling celestial cow of Indra, also called Surabhi, filling the earth with her fragrance and giving it the name *gandhavati*, is said to be the fountain head of all cattle on earth. She symbolised the abundance and proliferation of nature and thus stood for motherhood and fertility. She also represented Śrī, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Thus, Kāmadhenu worship in India stood for invoking motherhood, fertility, prosperity and all material well being. The worship of cow symbolised Kāmadhenu worship. The cow represented the earth as well. It is said, when the atrocities of Kāṁsa increased, the mother earth prayed Lord Viṣṇu to redeem her from the burden of Kāṁsa. Viṣṇu then incarnated himself as Lord Kṛṣṇa to protect the cow, symbolically the earth, and extincted Kāṁsa.

In this painting, all over the body of Kāmadhenu gods and humans are painted. The abdomen is painted in blue, signifying the ocean with its aquatic creatures. Here Kāmadhenu represents the earth with its oceans.

The long inscription below the painting gives the list of gods and their position on Kāmadhenu's body. Starting from the horns and proceeding to the hooves, one can identify various gods and other living creatures. Brahmā and Viṣṇu are seen on the left and right horns. Two four armed Ashvini Kumars are noticed in the ears. A goddess occupies the forehead. Śiva and Pārvatī mounted on Nandī are placed near the left ear and also over the left launch. A crescent moon occupies the upper part of the tail. Gaṇeśha is seen on the dewlap. Other minor deities occupy different positions on Kāmadhenu's body. Mount Kailash, the abode of Śiva, is shown amidst the oceans on the abdomen. It is interesting to note that artist painted the infant Kṛṣṇa in the udders of the Kāmadhenu just to emphasis that cowherd boy Vrindāvana — Kṛṣṇa is their saviour.

The composition is quite simple. Against a dark red background, the sage Vaishistha is seen worshipping the divine cow Kāmadhenu. Sage Vashistha, Kāmadhenu and its calf are painted in white while Kṛṣṇa in blue depicted here as a cowherd boy, is standing under the tree with his stick.



हेमाद्रिः त्रैलोक्यं गच्छन् विष्णुं नमस्कृत्य चतुर्भुजं दृष्ट्वा तस्मात्प्राप्तं वदन् ॥ १ ॥ शृंगमूले गवां निस्त्रयं वा विष्णुः समश्नुतौ ॥ शृंगप्रेतनेनी शान्तिश्चावराणि वराणि च ॥ गले ये मध्ये महादेवः सर्वं भूतं मया स्तुतम् ॥ जलाटग्रेऽपि मादेनी मया स्तुता ॥ २ ॥ कव
 काश्चनोनागो नासाग्रसमाश्रितौ ॥ कर्णयोरेव चिनिनोदेनोवाक्षं विः शरिरेषा स्फुरौ ॥ दंतेषु चायनः सरोजिन्नां गेवरुणरिथेतः ॥ सरप्यानि चतुर्कारे मास पश्चात्स्य गन्धयोः ॥ संस्कारं कुर्वन् शोष्ठौ न प्रिभामिन्द्रः समाश्रितः ॥ रक्षसोऽपि कश्चिदेव तुः साध्याश्चोरसिंश्चतः ॥
 चतुष्पादो हस्तो धर्मः स्वयं जंघासु सुष्ठिकः ॥ रत्नमयैषु गंधर्वाः लुगाग्रेषु च पञ्चगः ॥ रत्नराणां पश्चिमाग्रेषु गणायोऽस्तरसोऽस्थितः ॥ येकादराक्षद्रः पुरश्चेन भवः सरोजं क्षीबु शोणितः ॥ तलस्थाः ॥ पितरः सोमो मां गुलमाश्रितः ॥ आदित्याश्च योवालि पौत्रि
 नाव्यवस्थितः ॥ साक्षाद्गो गच्छ गोमुत्रे यमुना गोमया स्थितः ॥ शिरे सरस्वती देवी नर्मदा देवि संस्थितः ॥ हुतावा नश्च यंसपीडं ह्यनां नान्गुलनतः ॥ अस्त्राविंशतिरेवावां क्रोडयोरो मधुसूतः ॥ ३ ॥ ५२ रेपुश्चिदेवो अष्टमजसरोऽप्यवकाशना चत्वारसागरारभेधे गि
 रः त्रैकुटादिभिः ॥ गवां यंच यो धराः मुख्यशित्फलोदयानां वलिस्त्व गवामपुनियते रशिते भगवद्विष्णुः ॥ १ ॥ गवां यंच यः ॥

Plae No. 19

Nanda and other cowherds moving to Vrindāvana

An illustration to the Bhāgavata - Purāṇa

Kangra, Pahari, circa A.D. 1785-90

Paper, 27.5x35.5 cm

Acc. No.: 49.10/239

Strange things are happenings now days, and there seem to roam dangerous and evil spirits all around.” Nanda said to his clan’s elderly people, whom he called for a meeting in his house to discuss the events which never happened before in Gokula. Harassed by several demons Putanā, Triṇāvata, Bakāsura, Shaktāsura etc. sent by Kamsa to kill Krishṇa Nanda thought that Krishṇa was not safe in Gokula so they Yadavas decided to migrate from Gokula to Vrindāvana as soon as possible.

Once it was decided to shift, the people of Gokula packed their household things and started the journey towards Vrindavana, keeping their bulls, cows and calves in front and mounting the aged and the young ones in chariots, and carts.

The Kangra artist minutely painted the caravan of herders moving towards Vrindāvan. Nanda in red canopied chariot is looking like a dignified noble man of Mughal court. He is shown leading his clan’s herdsman. This painting reveals numerous details—the majestic white bulls of Nanda’s chariot, the old man with green turban driving the chariot of the Divine children, the out stretched arms of Krishṇa and Balarāma, a lady carrying her child on her shoulders, another lady holding her *charkhā* - spinning wheel, on her head, two men carrying huge bundle of their house hold things, deep in thoughts an old lady behind Nanda’s chariot, a man in green *jāmā* carrying a churning rod and several other minute details all painted with utmost care to create the atmosphere of a village life of Punjab hills.

It is a crowded composition, yet every individual is painted with fine brush line and balanced colours. The background space is filled with river, trees and two small quails — *chakors*, seating on a big boulder. This painting is a fine example of the transformation of Mughal naturalism into Pahari style.

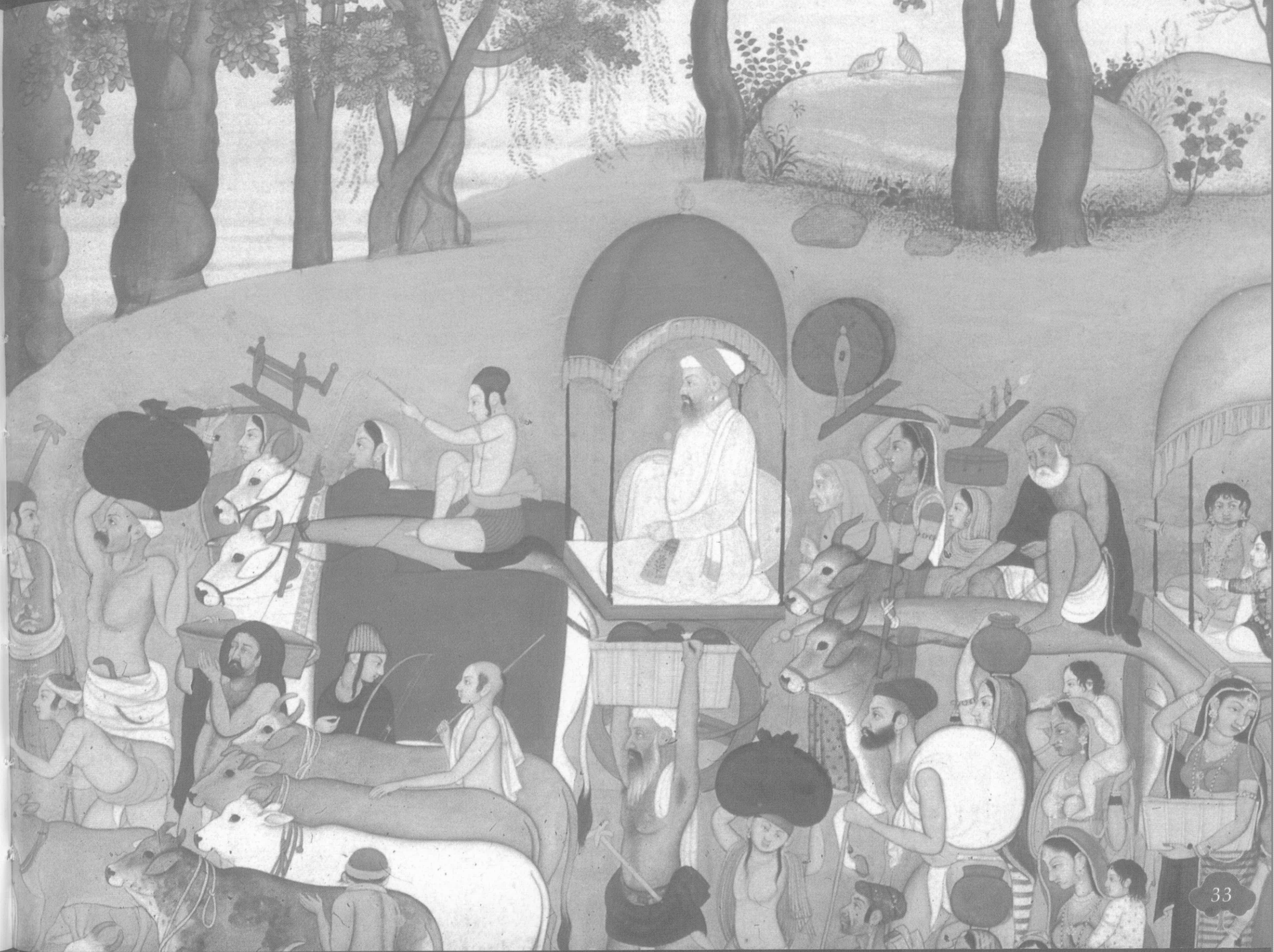




Plate No. 20
Krishṇa in coils of serpent Kāliyā

An illustration to Bhāgavata Purāṇa
Mewar, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1720
Paper, 25.5x41 cm., Acc. No. 54.71/10

Once while playing with Balārāma and other *gopas* Krishṇa happened to reach the place known as Kāliadah at Yamunā, where lived the deadly black serpent Kāliyā polluting with its venom the waters of Yamunā and the entire surroundings so much that trees and grass near it got dry and the birds that flew over it fell lifeless. Reaching there Krishṇa climbed a *Kadamba* tree and suddenly jumped into the river water. Annoyed and disturbed Kāliyā rose from beneath the agitated waters spitting fire, smoke and venom and engulfed Krishṇa into its coils rendering him immobile. Hearing the news Nanda and Yashodā and several others rushed to the spot. Balarāma encouraged Krishṇa to subdue the serpent. Hearing his words Krishṇa, struggling to overcome the snake, expanded his body and freeing himself from Kāliyā's grip compressed down the serpent's hoods and jumped over it putting more and more weight. Taking under his control all the hundred hoods of Kāliyā Krishṇa danced on it. and thus subduing Kaliya restored peace, environment and beauty of the place.

In this unique Mewar painting the artist has superbly rendered Krishṇa in Kāliyā's coils. The deep, dark surging waters of Yamunā, black serpent Kāliyā with white strips and Krishṇa in blue have been powerfully depicted. The hoods of Kāliyā look like a *chhatra* over Krishṇa. Balarāma's action too has been vividly depicted. He seems to tell Krishṇa, with the action and position of his hands, to subdue Kāliyā. A huge tree in the centre divides the painting in two parts. The lotuses in purple colour balance the entire deep waves of Yamunā.

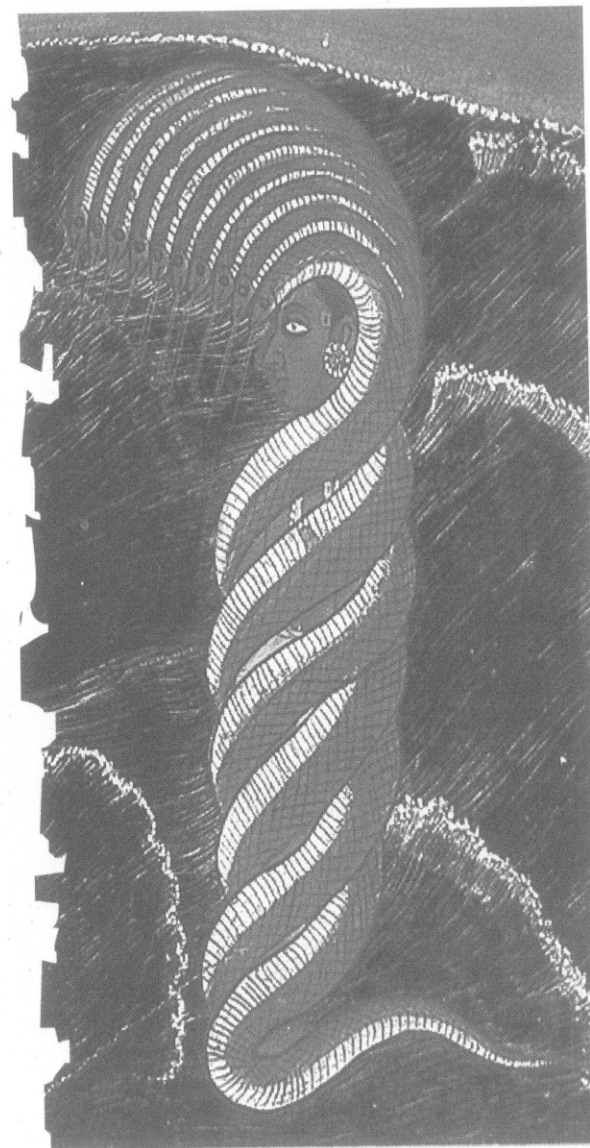


Plate No. 21

Vastra-haran

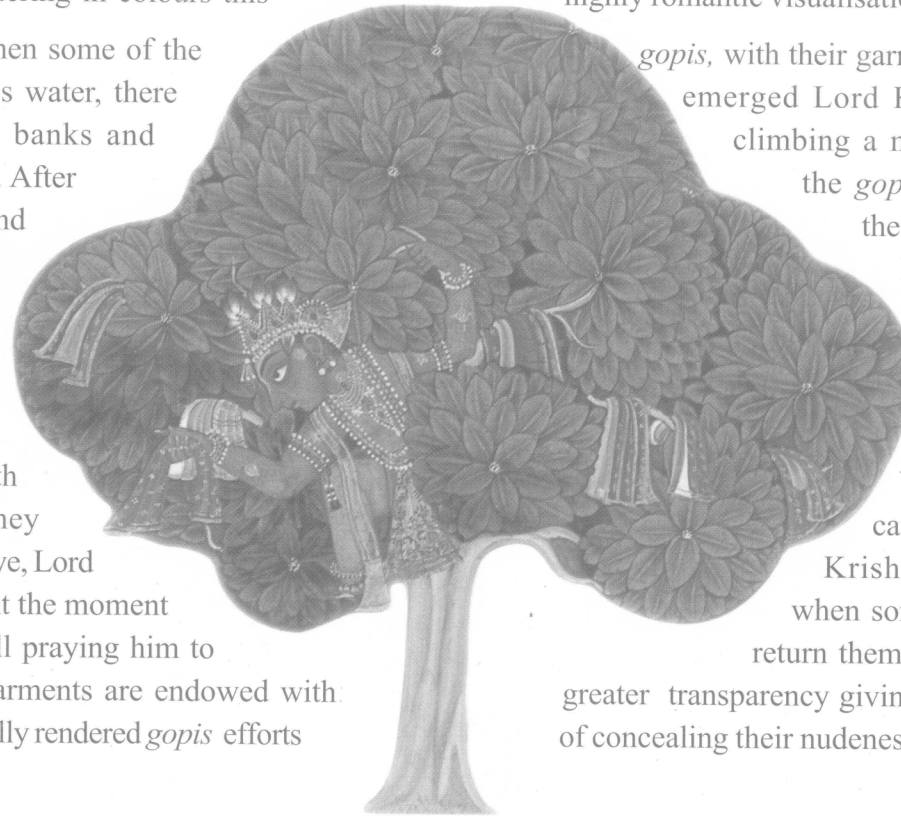
Mankot, Pahari, circa A.D. 1725

Paper, 19.2x28.5 cm Acc. No. 1268

Collection: Govt. Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

Among the naughtiest acts which Lord Krishna has been conceived to involve in one relates to his stealing away the garments of maidens, the *gopis*, when semi-nude they were bathing in a pool near Vrindāvana. Though a sheer imaginative expansion of his legend, the episode has been very widely represented in visual arts and wardic tradition. The painters of almost all schools and periods have sought delight in rendering in colours this highly romantic visualisation of Krishna theme.

It is said that once when some of the nude in a pool of Yamunā's water, there garments lying on pool's banks and himself behind its branches. After looked around but only to find *gopis*, with searching eyes, were traceable their clothes. branches of the nearby concealed behind the garments in his hands and a water they prayed him, with their clothes, but unless they their nudeness from human eye, Lord clothes. The artist has caught the moment water while others were still praying him to the figures that their wet garments are endowed with exposure. The artist has skilfully rendered *gopis* efforts



gopis, with their garments put off, were bathing semi-emerged Lord Krishna. He collected all their climbing a nearby *Kadamba* tree concealed the *gopis* had finished their bath, they their clothes missing. The bewildered looked all around, but nowhere Suddenly they perceived the *Kadamba* stirring. They found branches Lord Krishna with their smile on his face. From inside the both hands folded to return them came out of waters, which screened Krishna would not give them their when some of them had come out of the return them their clothes. He has so painted greater transparency giving their form and organs as much of concealing their nudeness with their bodily postures.

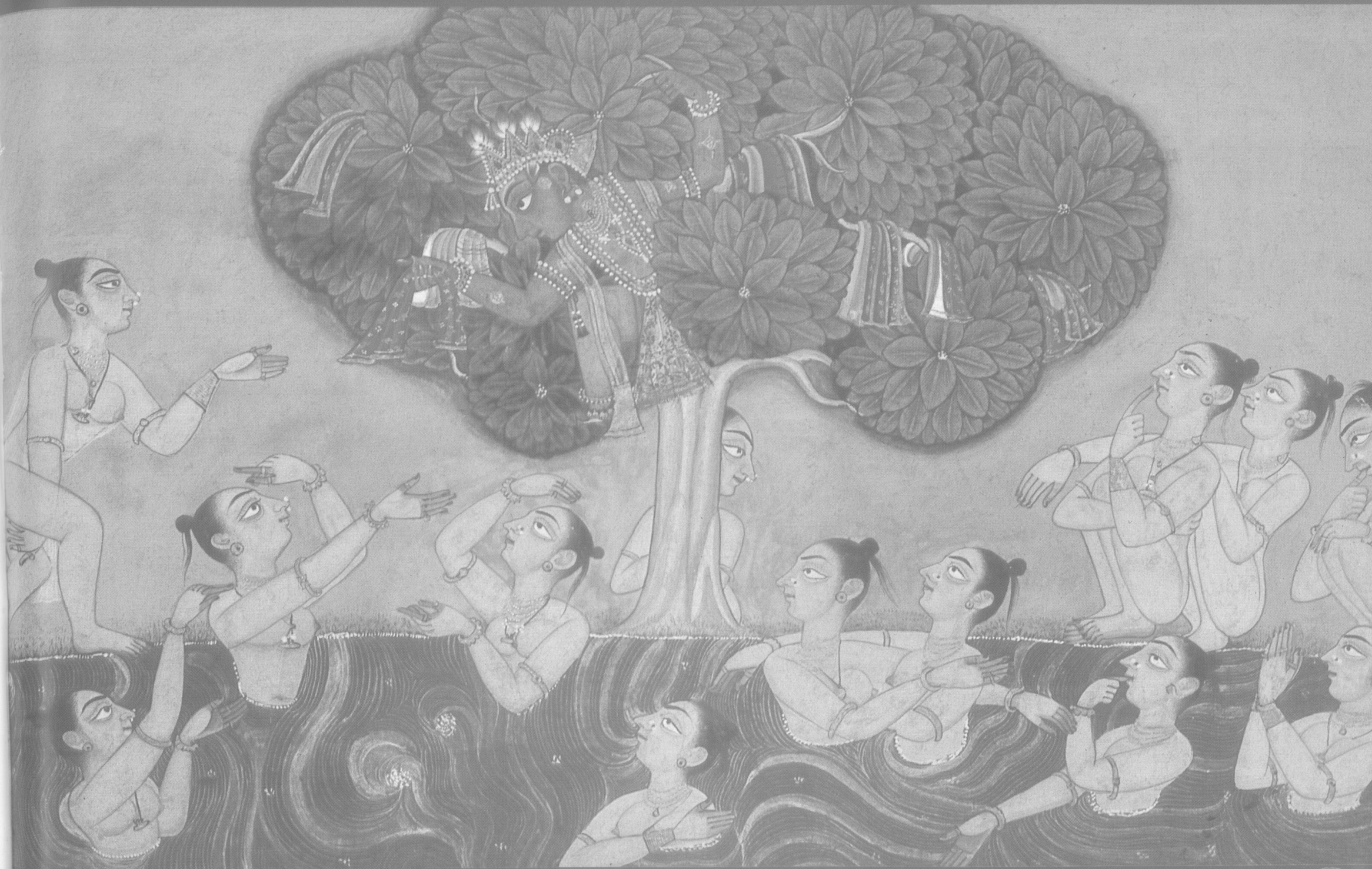




Plate No. 22

Krishna swallowing the forest fire

Based on the couplets of Bihari Sat Sai

Mewar, Rajasthan, dated 1719 A.D.

Paper, 25x21 cm, Artist: Jagnath

Acc. No. 68.869

This painting, compartmentalised into two parts, shows in its upper portion Krishna wearing a red *gunjana* garland and the two *gopis* appreciating it comparing it with the forest fire such as Krishna himself had swallowed earlier for protecting his cows from its outbreak. It is said in Bhāgavata-Purāna that once there broke a huge fire in the forest near Vrindāvana engulfing in it *gopas* and hundreds of Krishna's cows. Hearing of its Krishna rushed to the spot and finding no other way, swallowed the fire and thus protected the cattle. In the lower part of the painting Krishna is shown swallowing the fire with his bowl liked moulded palms which has caught in its ring several cows.

The painting based on poet Bihari's couplet from his Sat Sai conveys how to describe the beauty of *gunjana* garland on the breast of Krishna.

सखि सोहत गोपाल के उरु गुंजन की माल ॥
बाहिर लसत मनो पिये दावानल की ज्वाल ॥

The two *gopis* depicts the occasion saying that the firous *gunjana* garland against the deep green body of Krishna looks as if the forest fire which Krishna had earlier swallowed was peeping out his breast.

This Mewar painting by the artist Jagnath transcribes Bihari's couplet into bright colours and fine lines using with great skill the golden yellow and red. The treatment of trees and cows and costumes all are in traditional Mewar style. Profusely used gold is suggestive of pomp and show of Mewar court under Rana Sangram Singh II.

सखिमाहतगोपालकेउरगुंनतवीमालाबाहिरलसतमनोपियेदेव
लकीज्वाल॥६॥

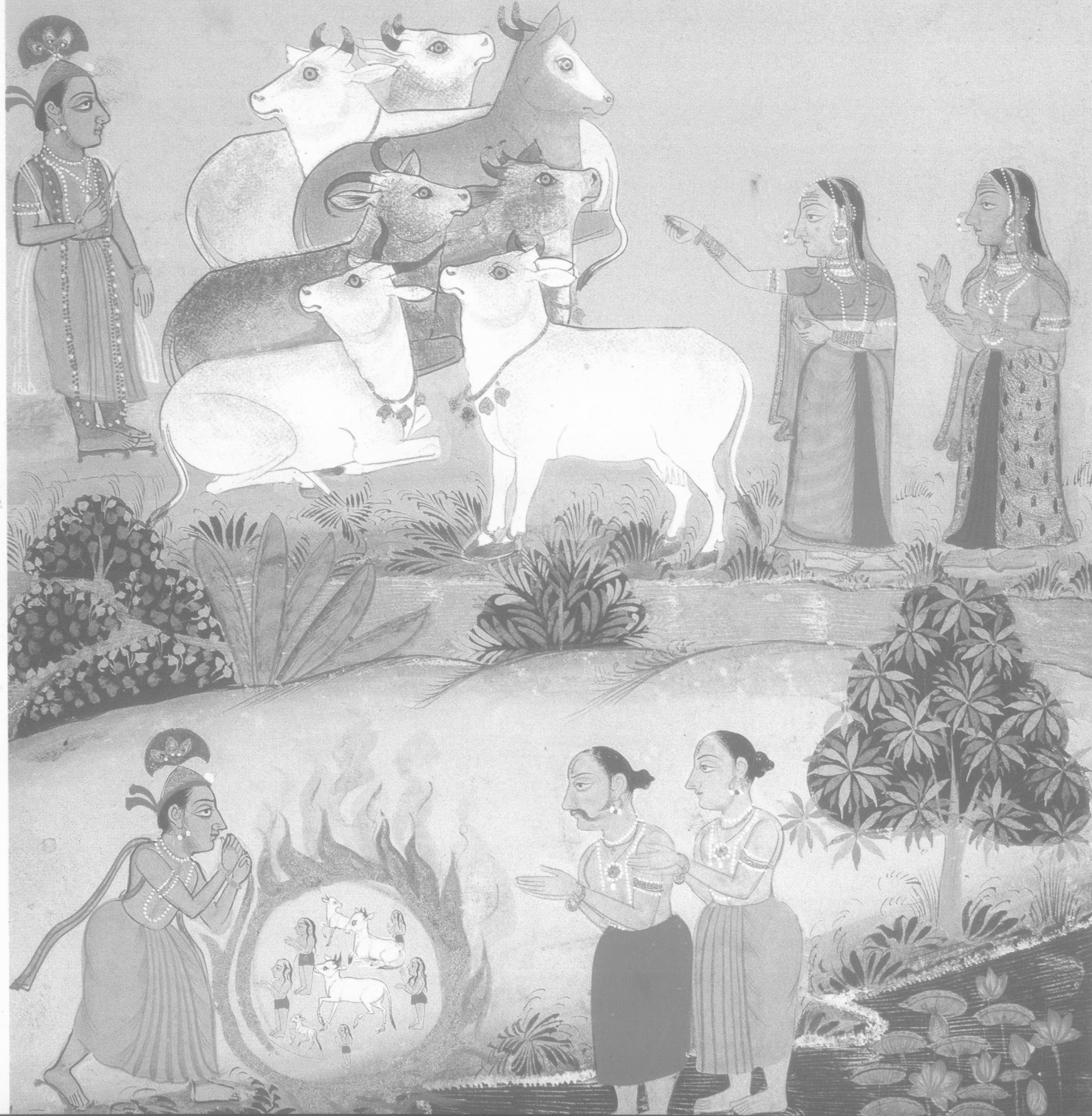


Plate No: 23

Krishṇa lifting Mount Govardhana

An illustration to the Bhāgavata Purāna

Jaipur, Rajasthan, circa A.D. 1778-85

Paper, 47x71 cm

Acc No. A.G. 1385

Collection: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur

Lord Krishṇa is said to have introduced the mountain worship cult in Vaishnava way of life. Once when Nanda and his people were organising the traditional annual worship of life giving rain god Indra, Krishṇa persuaded them to give it up and resort to the worship of cattle, mountain and forest which bestowing prosperity on them were their real deities. Krishṇa's idea was highly welcomed and great celebration for the mountain worship were held. Lord Krishṇa, without revealing it to the cowherds, assumed the form of mountain god and accepted the offerings.

Indra was naturally offended. In retaliation he stormed with torrential rains the entire Vraja intending to destroy the cowherds and their cattle. But for *their* protection Krishṇa lifted like umbrella the Mount Govardhana on a single finger keeping it like this for seven days and covered the entire Vraja under it. Indra, witnessing the prowess of Lord Krishṇa realised his error and recognised him as Lord Viṣṇu and submitted to him.

In this painting of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, Krishṇa is shown lifting Mount Govardhana to save the inhabitants of Vraja from the wrath of Indra. The unknown Jaipur artist painted Krishṇa in a very majestic posture. He is wearing golden crown with peacock feathers and yellow *dhoti-pītambar*. The artist decorated him with gold and pearl jewellery. His long garland of white, flows is popularly known as *Vyajantimālā*. The painting is divided into two parts - the upper part is the Mount Govardhana and the lower is with the people of Vraja and various gods with their respective *vahanas*. They have come to see this amazing and marvellous (*adbhuta*) miracle of Krishṇa. It was the act that, gave him the title, 'Govardhanadhārī.'

The divinity of Krishṇa is superbly painted with minute details, sensitive care and fine colours under the patronage of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur (1778-1803). He was an ardent devotee of Krishṇa. At his instance his court painters prepared many paintings related to *Bhāgavata Purāna*.



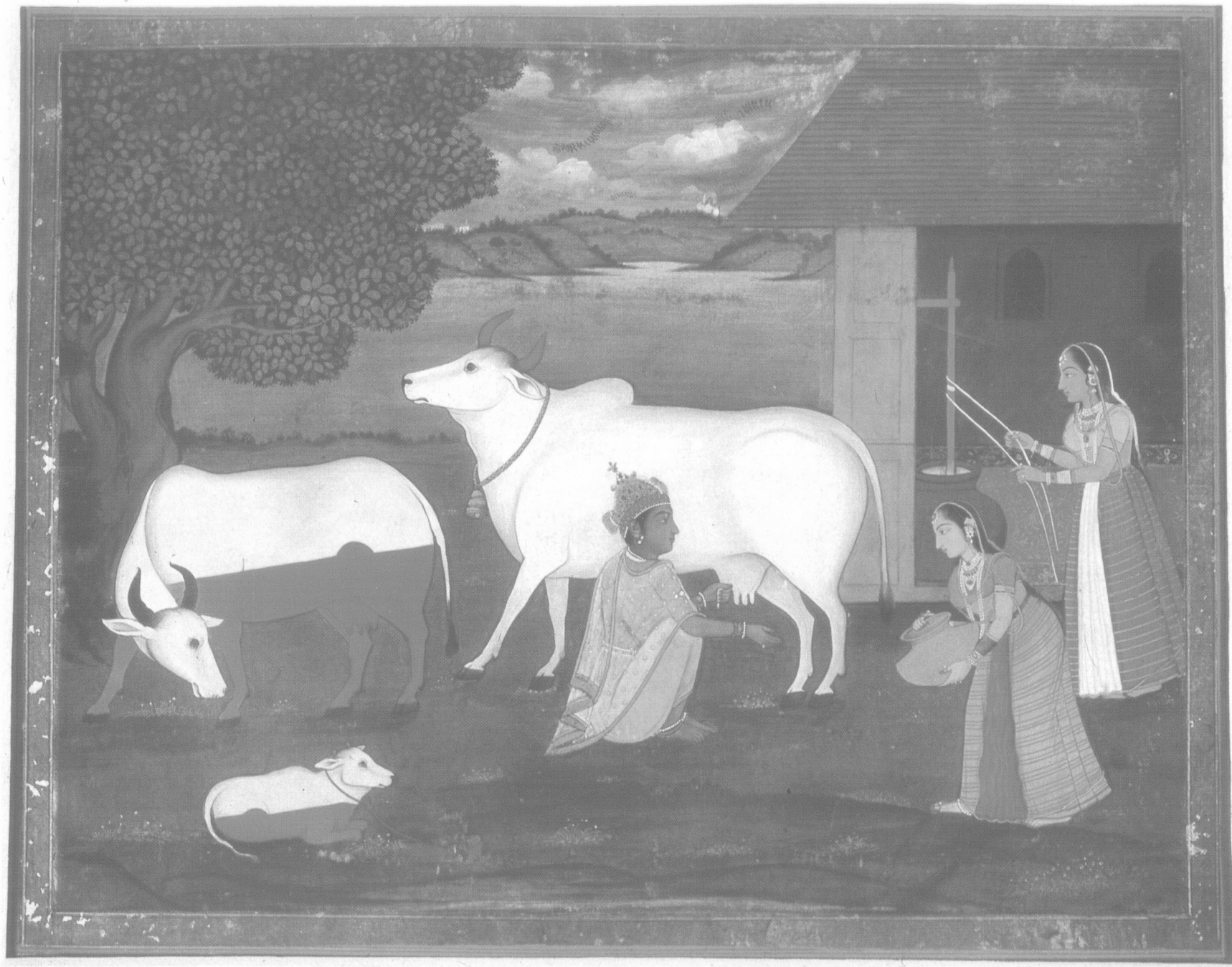


Plate No. 24

Krishṇa milking a cow

Oudh, Provincial Mughal, early 19th cent.

Paper, 31x24.5 cm

Acc. No: 58.58/6

The Vaishṇava cult, with Lord Krishṇa as its supreme model, sought to attain both, the sublimation and the salvation, in attachment to this world rather than in a detached way of life. As such, Lord Krishṇa has been conceived as involved in all things wherein a worldly man was required to involve. As a child he has been conceived stealing butter and as a youth teasing maidens and making love with them. Here he has been conceived as milking a cow, something commonly required of cowherd man.

The Oudh artist has beautifully visualised the entire Vraja in this very compact miniature painting, the nature with river Yamunā, mountain, clouds, tree and green pastures, or forestation, the cattle constituting the main occupation and milking a cow and churning, the basic structure of Vraja's traditional economy. The cottage represents man's abode. Richly carpeted floor of the hut laid with a red carpet with green border indicates that it is Nanda's own house and the rich costume and precious jewels of the lady churning the curd indicate that she is none other than mother Yashodā. The other lady with the pitcher is from Nanda's household. Lord Krishṇa, though milking the cow like a common cowherd man, is in his *pitambar* and golden crown studded with precious gems, the celestial form he is widely worshipped in. Here the artists has blended myth with the fact. It is said, cows loved lord Krishṇa more than their calves. Hence, whenever he was near their udders, the milk of it own oozed from them. In the painting seeing the milk so oozing a lady rushes to him with a pitcher to collect it. The other cow with her lower half orange is affectionately gazing at Lord Krishṇa as if awaiting her turn. The use of orange colour has given dramatic effect to the painting.



Plate No. 25

Krishṇa celebrating Holi

Datia, Bundelkhand, Central India

Paper, 26.5x17.5 cm, circa A.D. 1780-90

Acc. No: 63.992

Holi, one of the two major events of India's ancient cultural tradition observed annually at the end of her calendar's concluding month *Phālguna*, is the festival of colours, gaiety, romance and of course of harvest. Holi represents India's basic secular temperament and is not born of any sect or philosophy, though subsequently some myths got associated with it. It is celebrated by sprinkling perfumed coloured waters and coloured powders on the last day of *Phālguna*, when autumn sets in, shivering winter passes away and a cosy luke-warm morning dawns, and in festive mood bands of bardic singers, drums players, and of romantic maidens and youths, young and old teem the streets of every village, town and metropolis besmearing, or even dousing each others, with coloured pastes, powders and waters, embracing with love and wishing for prosperity and well-being making the entire atmosphere most colourful and romantic wherein love and sensuality sprout and bloom. Holi, in nutshell, allows liberties, the romantic and sensual once, and these are not all and always so holy.

Krishṇa, the colourful lord of love and romance, always had to poets and artists special appeal and attraction. To painters particularly, the *pitambar* *Krishṇa* with brilliant peacock feathers attached to his crown or any kind of headdress and a red sash (*patakā*) on his waist playing Holi amidst its colours and colourful *gopis* held utmost attraction. Perhaps his colourful presence provided to them a sort of colour contrast as well, which most suited their medium and expression.

In this beautiful painting from Datia, a centre of Bundeli art and style, the artist focuses *Krishṇa* in its centre, or rather makes him his focal point. *Radha*, his Divine love companion, is holding a tray of *gulal* and *itra* (perfume) bottles. She is seen applying *tika* on his forehead. *Krishṇa*, on the other hand, is seen impatiently awaiting his turn to besmear *Rādhā*'s face with the colour he has in his hand. The blue *Krishṇa* has been painted with yellow *dhoti* and *patakā*. The conical cap decorated with a fan like peacock feather, with which *Krishṇa* has been painted, is typical of Bundeli tradition. *Rādhā*'s red costume, pearl jewellery and the *sperpech* on her forehead provide further variety and contrast to painting's colour scheme. For providing thematic variety the artist has painted four *gopis* along *Rādhā* holding spray-pipes and three *gopala* behind *Krishṇa* playing on musical instruments symbolical not only of a festive mood but also that *Rādhā* added, as a Divine entity, colours to the universe being herself the *prakriti* and *Krishṇa*, being the all pervading supreme soul, vibrated life and echoed it with harmonious music.



Plate No. 26

Cows send-off after Govardhana-poojā

Jaipur, Rajasthan, tale 18th Century

Paper, 35 x 51 cm

Acc. No : 49.1/295

This highly ceremonial and pompous occasion depicted here in this charming Jaipur school painting does not relate to cows daily routine sendoff for grazing, as it is usually claimed by art critics. No doubt, the cow, being the very basis of its life and economy, was greatly loved, revered, taken care of and fostered by the people Vraja, under Lord Krishna especially, however, what the painting depicts is somewhat different and much more. Every cow with painted horns, ornaments, sandal-paste-hand-prints and with entire body beautifully coloured, the cowherd boys in ceremonial crowned turbans, jewels, sashes and costumes, and beautifully coloured sticks in hands, houses nicely white washed, painted doors and walls elegantly decorated with curtains and garlands, and flowers scattered all over the floor, and the ladies, all in ceremonial bright costumes, ornaments, and *mahāvāra* and bangles, and with garlands and trays for worship in hands indicate that the painting depicts a ceremonial occasion of some festival, something of a formal character.

It is unanimously acknowledged that after the worship of Indra was given up on the intervention of Lord Krishna, the people of Vraja had adopted the triple worship of the mountain Govardhana, cattle and forest. Such worship was performed on the morning next to *Deepawali* night. This triple worship continues till date, though the worship of the mountain Govardhana and forest has reduced now to a symbolic form. The cowdung is heaped like a small mound and a small branch of tree is planted on it. After its worship along with the worship of cattle is over the cows, calves bulls, and other cattle adorned in all gaiety, as here in this painting, are escorted to forest for grazing. The cowherd boys too are in their best attires and a ceremonial send off is given by ladies of each house. Before proceeding to forest all cattle gather outside the village to be led further by the scheduled cowherd men. This is called *Govardhana poojā*, with Govardhana suggesting both, the montain Govardhana and the *vardhana* of *go-dhana* that is the worship for increase in cattle-wealth.

This painting undoubtedly represents the occasion of cows send-off soon after Govardhana worship. Elegance of each house speaks of *Deepawali*. The festivity seen everywhere is manifest of the great festival entire rednering. And, Lord Krishna is udoubtedly the centre of the attraction.

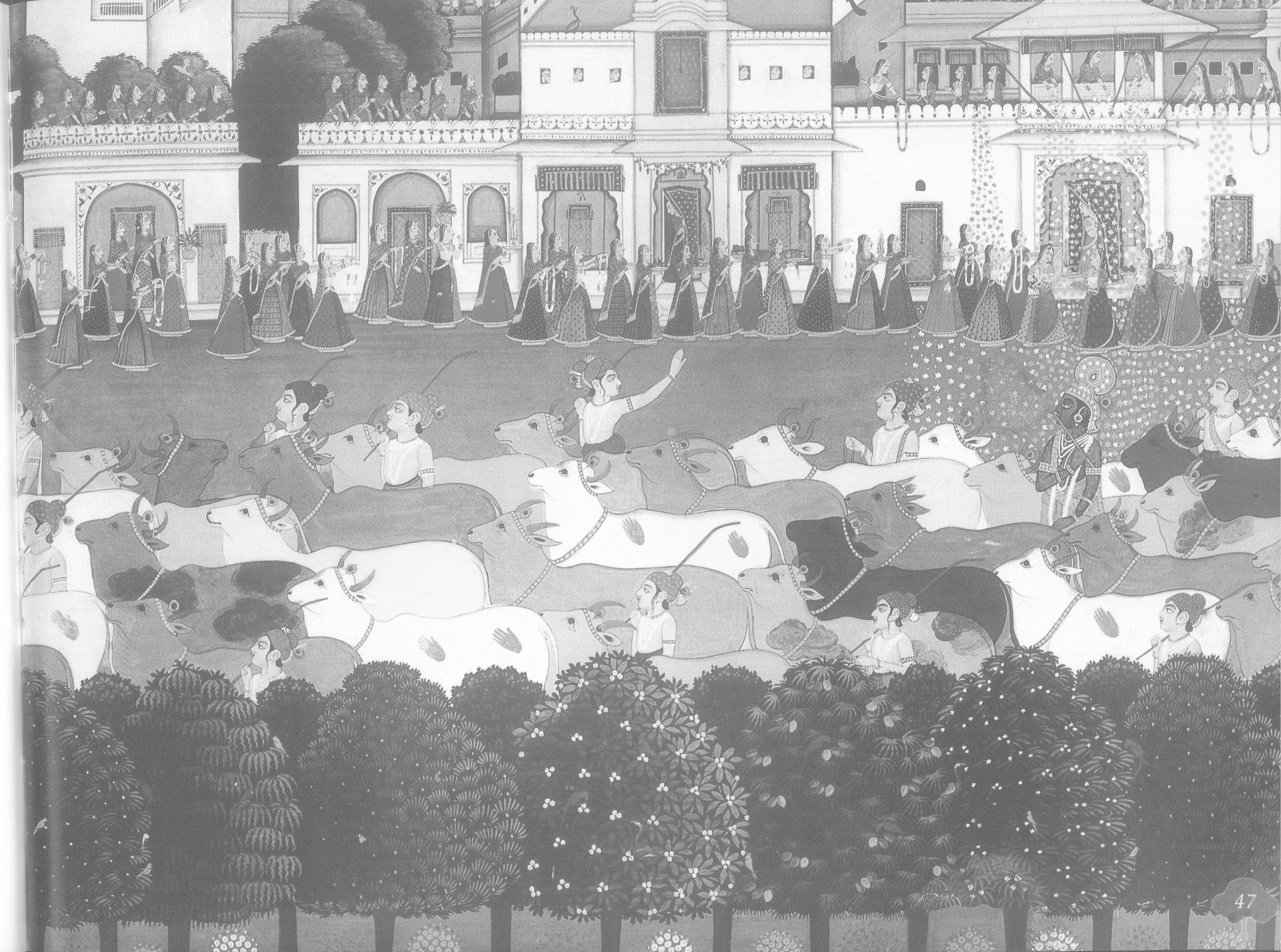


Plate No. 27

Krishṇa persuading Rādhā to go inside the cluster of trees

Based on the poetry of Keshvadasa Rasikapriyā

Kangra, Pahari, circa A.D. 1820-25

Paper,

Acc. No:

This late Kangra miniature of a bigger size, based on a couplet from Rasikapriya, one of the most illustrated works of Hindi literature, by the well known medieval Hindi poet and the founder of classical (Reeti) tradition in Hindi literature *Mahakavi* Keshvadasa, depicts Krishṇa persuading Rādhā to go with him behind the cluster of trees, obviously for a chit-chat and love making, though Rādhā is reluctant, perhaps, because she is conscious of the presence of one of her *sakhis* on the top storey of the adjoining house. Lord Krishṇa catches hold indicating with his other hand of Rādhā's *odhani* and draws her towards the cluster of trees, Rādhā, with a mind tossing in between 'yes' and 'no', seems to gently draw it back.

It seems, while coming back with cows at *go-dhooli*, Lord Krishṇa finds Rādhā outside Vrindāvana awaiting him, or may be, otherwise. He instantly disposes of with cows the cowherd boys accompanying him. Even before they were out of sight, he catches hold of Rādhā's *odhani* persuading her to go with him inside the nearby bower of trees. Rādhā who seems to be fully adorned and alike willing to have her evening with him, notices the presence of one of her *sakhis* in the upper pavilion of an adjoining house and is, hence, reluctant to go with him. The artist has powerfully depicted Rādhā's gentle reluctance through one of her hands placed on her bosom and with the other drawing back her *odhani*, and Lord Krishṇa's persuasion through sensuality in his eyes. For making them the central theme of the painting the artist has given their figures extra projection and proportion. The Kangra style, known for its refinement, restraint, divinity of beauty and for lines and rich colours, has done here full justice in drawing a bashful coy Rādhā and an impatient Krishṇa, the rhythm of lines, the emotions in eyes, the love within and the beauty all around.

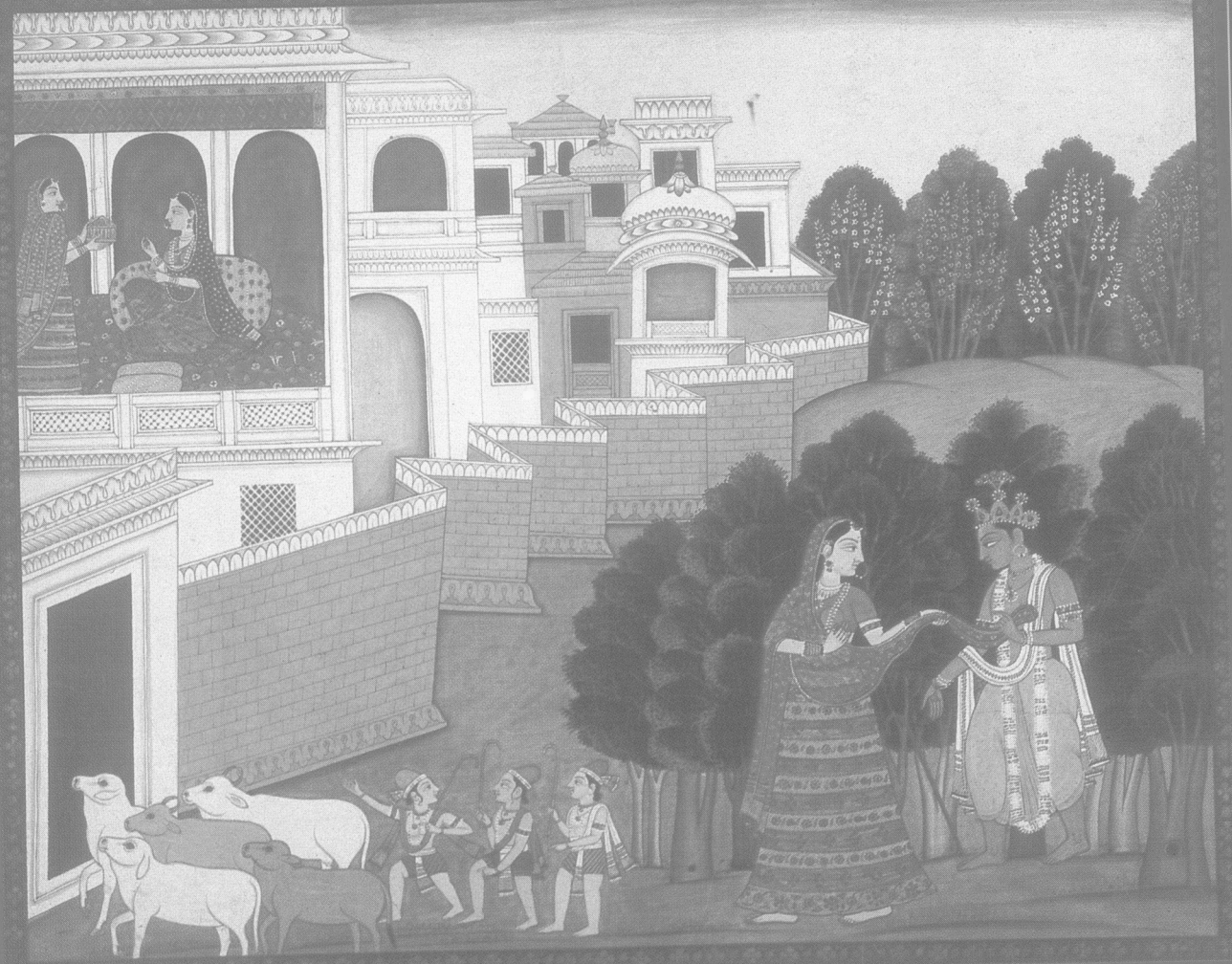




Plate No. 28

The Mahārāsa — the Cosmic dance of Lord Krishna

Jaipur, Rajasthan, early 19th cent.

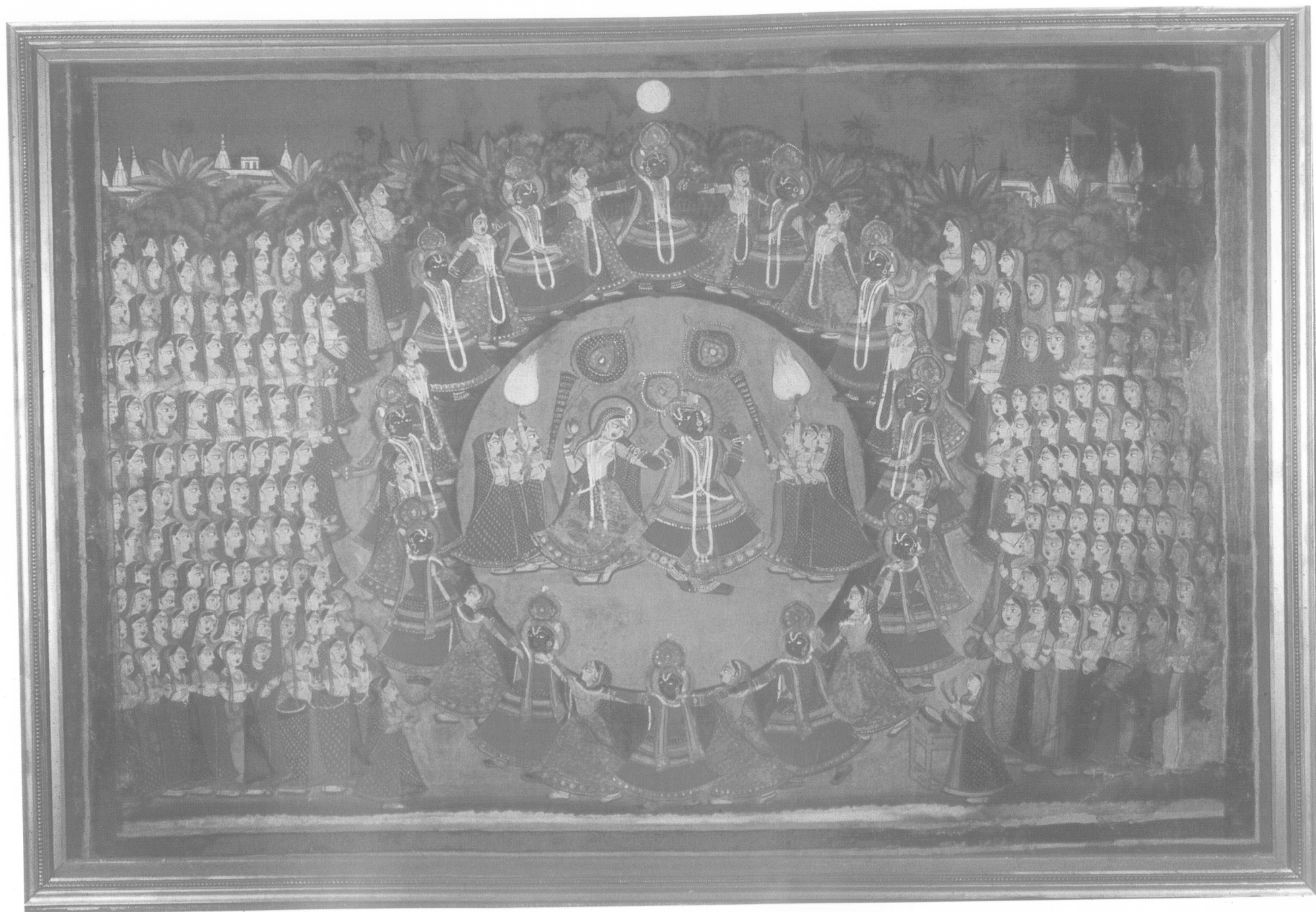
Paper pasted on cloth, 71x105 cm

Acc No. : 82.564

This large painting of Jaipur school is a depiction of Krishna's *Mahārāsa*, the cosmic dance symbolically involving the entire cosmos in the divine act of the Lord. In the Vaishṇava cult love and devotion are the prime means of His realisation, and in ecstasy and ecstatic involvement in dance and music the love and devotion get best expressed. Thus, ecstatic dance, too, leads to His realisation.

The artist has created a Krishna figure with the each *gopi* dancing in the *Rāsamandala*. But, the *gopis* who are merely witnessing from beyond the dancing ring do not realise Him with them. It symbolises that those who ecstatically involve in His divine act, the cosmic dance, realise Him with them, but those who merely witness His *leelā*, the divine act, only feel His presence but do not realise Him with them.

The painting is not physically compartmentalised, yet themtically it is divisible into four distinct parts, the centre with dancing figures of Rādhā and Krishna; the *Rāsamandala*, or the dancing ring, with *gopis* dancing in full ecstāsy with figures of Krishna; myriad of *gopis* witnessing His *leelā* and the void beyond representing the cosmic background. Lord Krishna, as the incarnation of Vishṇu, represents the *purusha*, and Rādhā, as the incarnation of earth, represents *prakṛiti*, and the interaction of the two the *purusha* and *prakṛiti*, represents the cosmic act, the cause of all creation. This, the centre represents the cause of creation; those who are in love and devoted to Him and His divine act are part of His Great Act, the *Mahārāsa*; those who merely witness His Great Act feel His presence and are delighted and sublimated; and the soothing light which the moon bestows, the standards of truth the *patakas* stand for, the depth and vastness which the deep blue skies represent, the auspiciousness which bananas and other auspicious plants and vegetation symbolise and the holy and pious feelings which the temples send forth are merely the reflection of His Great Divine Act, the *Mahārāsa*.



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